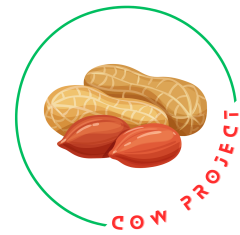


COW PROJECT CBO

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Spreading Local Love, One Jar at a Time

Project Title: Educational ICT Centre for Local Children of Smallholder Farmers

Project Location: Oyugis **Geo-Coordinates:** 0°31'30.9"S 34°43'37.2"E

Implementing Organisation: COW Project Community Based Organisation

Proposed Budget:

Executive Summary

This funding proposal seeks support for the establishment of an Education ICT Center to provide digital skills, educational resources and training opportunities to children of smallholder farmers in Oyugis region - Homabay County. The initiative aims to bridge the digital divide, improve access to modern learning tools and equip children with skills that are critical for future economic and educational opportunities.

Smallholder households often face systemic challenges such as limited access to quality education, lack of exposure to technology and limited career opportunities. Due to economic exclusion, most households are often isolated and their voice or say is limited. These factors contribute to rural-urban migration, school dropout and intergenerational poverty.

About COW Project

Addressing the challenges faced by smallholder farmers, children and other food-insecure families in Homabay requires a multi-faceted approach that spans policy, economic strategies, technological interventions and grassroots interventions. In this spirit, the COW Project was founded in Oyugis in 2021 as a community-based organization. The project believes that it has the potential to address some of these challenges by making meaningful grassroots initiatives to benefit both the smallholder farmers and the communities they live in. Since its inception, the COW Project has been responding to food-insecurity needs affecting the project area through partnerships. Despite budgetary constraints, there's been ongoing process improvements, training, feedback and success stories from stakeholders and other communities. The most recent **MSME** training attended by the project was organized by the **KCB Foundation**.

To reverse food insecurity trends in the region, the project has initiated a peanut butter processing facility in Oyugis (Kenya), operated by the local community. The aim is to simulate market access to locally grown peanuts, offer a paradigm shift in crop diversification and reverse outdated farming practices. Raw materials for the production process are locally sourced wherever possible. Proceeds from peanut-butter sales are reinvested in the project to expand its programs and sustain the smallholder farming community.

Peanut butter is a popular food spread and a common source of proteins among households in Homabay. The COW's peanut butter stands out in the market not just in taste but also in quality and superiority. The product is processed just from roasted nuts with no additives, an aspect that has been received well by its consumers. This has resulted in increased peanut butter consumption and mutual nutritional benefits to the community. The smallholders who've engaged with the project since its inception have increased their bargaining power. More farmers/groups are encouraged to go into contractual farming with the COW Project. This will reduce the potential risks they face, whenever there's a surplus or drop in market demand.

Processing of peanut-derived products is an evolving value-addition strategy of the COW Project. The peanut-butter program is tailored to provide immediate solutions as well as to build the capacity of the community to address future economic challenges. The project aims to strengthen the smallholder farming businesses, contribute to local economies and promote sustainable farming. Since the value-addition chain involves activities that require labor & skills, it creates more rural job opportunities and elevates the community's socio-economic status. A planned scaling up of the current peanut processing capacity will enable the smallholders to have an assured market for their produce and reduce uncertainties associated with selling in the open-air markets.

Vision

To simulate collective investment and community involvement in removing barriers to better health, environment, wealth creation, food security and youth employment

Mission

To empower smallholder farmers and their families by promoting sustainable farming, fostering entrepreneurship, and building community resilience through skills training, value-addition, and creating market opportunities, while improving the nutritional well-being and economic stability of the local families

Problem Statement

In Homabay region, where smallholder farming is the primary livelihood, rural children face significant educational and economic challenges that impact their ability to thrive locally. Many rural schools lack adequate resources, such as access to digital literacy, quality learning materials, and skills training, which are essential for preparing children for modern careers. As a result, they often see limited educational and career opportunities in their communities, prompting them to migrate to urban areas in search of better jobs or drop out of school altogether and undertake odd jobs due to a lack of motivation and support.

This rural-urban migration, driven by the pursuit of educational and economic prospects, creates a cycle of economic stagnation and depopulation in the community. The young and active members of the community leave behind agricultural knowledge and family ties, often after completing basic education, exposing their aging parents to declining productivity, and weakened social cohesion. Furthermore, the outmigration of youth from rural areas reduces the potential for innovation and development within the agricultural sector, leading to economic instability for many families who mainly rely on farming.

For smallholder families, educational advancement for their children is a key driver for breaking the cycle of poverty. However, due to limited exposure to digital skills and career pathways outside of peasant farming, the children of such farmers lack the qualifications in life necessary to succeed in urban job markets. These skill gaps after completing school often lead to joblessness or low-paying jobs in the cities, undermining the very economic advancement they sought in migrating.

Digital literacy is essential for success in today's world. By learning these skills and accessing quality resources, the children of peasant farmers can also aspire to have better-paying jobs some day and pursue career paths outside traditional small-scale farming. Since schools in the region are often under-resourced, lack up-to-date learning materials, technology, and extracurricular support, the children struggle to keep up with their studies, acquire essential digital skills, and explore broader educational interests that extend beyond their limited school curriculum. Due to such educational gaps, many fall behind in their studies, which leads to lower academic performance, diminished interest in education, and even school dropouts. An Educational ICT Centre at COW project will address these issues by providing a state-of-the-art facility that supplements traditional schooling with 21st century skills development.

Proposed Project

The children of the smallholder farmers require supplementary digital literacy support, because it's the driving force for giving them more personalized and dynamic learning experiences outside regular school hours. This proposal seeks funding to renovate and furnish an idle building (room) to be used as a communal Educational ICT Resource Centre. The funds will be used to:

- Repair the structure, paint walls, and ensure the building is safe and conducive to learning
- Purchase chairs, computers & computer desks, and bookshelves to create a comfortable learning environment
- Purchase elementary ICT Books

ACTUAL STATE:



The unused building above will be transformed to offer a productive environment for children to spend after-school hours, reducing the risk of unproductive activities and school dropout.

DESIRED STATE:



The tables will be mounted directly on the wall to free up floor space usage and allow for efficient room utilization. The desks will accommodate different user needs such as computer stations and study areas. The design requires few materials compared to free-standing tables, thereby reducing costs.

Project Objectives

- To provide digital literacy training to 50+ children annually, equipping them with essential computer and technology skills
- To facilitate e-learning opportunities, such as access to online educational resources and coding workshops
- To enhance academic performance by offering after-school support programs using technology-assisted learning tools
- To empower smallholder farming families through community-based training programs in ICT and entrepreneurship for older children and youth

Impact

A proposed ICT Resource Center will provide a crucial bridge, equipping these children with access to modern educational tools, digital learning resources, and e-learning platforms. The center will exacerbate educational gaps by supplementing learning experience outside school regular hours in a structured technology-equipped environment. Through free communal access to books, computers, the internet, and educational software, it will foster digital literacy and educational support for rural children, adolescents and women in the region. The aim is to provide the children with access to information, training, and collaboration opportunities that will empower them with the tools needed to improve productivity, support a more equitable education experience to enable them to keep pace with their urban counterparts.

The Educational ICT Resource Centre will provide digital literacy training for the children, equipping them with essential technology skills and tutoring support that are often only available in urban schools. Young students will have the opportunity to access online educational resources to improve school performance, while the older ones can learn skills relevant to the job market. This shift will raise family educational opportunities and create pathways for intergenerational economic improvement, ultimately benefiting the entire smallholder farming communities.

The expanded access to education will create a foundation for lifelong learning and prepare young community members for diverse opportunities in the digital age. Additionally, by providing resources for various age groups and backgrounds, the center will encourage greater social inclusion, fostering a sense of community and shared learning.

To combat rural-urban migration, the Educational ICT Resource Centre will offer rural adolescents free valuable training opportunities that will help them explore local employment or entrepreneurial paths in future, such as agriculture, online businesses, and community services. By providing them with viable local opportunities, the center will help reduce rural-to-urban migration, fostering a strong, engaged youth presence that contributes to community development and continuity.

In cases of school holidays or limited access to schools, the center will provide a backup educational resource, ensuring that children's learning continues uninterrupted. Access to online learning platforms and educational content at the center will help prevent gaps in education due to external circumstances, supporting continuous learning and academic progress.

Sustainability



The COW Project has been encouraging children's involvement in peanut butter processing to learn the importance of sustainability, from farming using environmentally friendly practices to minimizing waste during value-addition. This

awareness fosters a mindset of resource conservation and environmental stewardship. The knowledge gained through peanut butter production is intended to inspire children to explore careers or businesses in agriculture, food processing, or entrepreneurship. This exposure will broaden their horizons, showing them the potential to contribute to and benefit from their community's economy.

The ICT center will initially benefit 50 children directly, with the potential to expand this number as resources increase. It will support the development of basic and advanced digital literacy skills, broadening the children's access to knowledge, enhancing school performance, and building a foundation for lifelong learning. The children will have free access to learning resources that support their academic growth and improve their chances of completing school.

For a stronger, more empowered and self-sustaining community, The COW Project will:

- engage local educators and volunteers and other educational organizations to support ICT training, promoting skills sharing and collaboration

- use renewable energy to reduce operational costs and ensure uninterrupted access to digital resources. Solar power energy will provide a cost-effective solution that reduces dependence on costly and unreliable grid electricity. By installing solar panels, the center will eliminate electricity bills, redirecting those funds towards educational resources, technology upgrades, and maintenance. In addition, solar energy aligns with global sustainable development goals, making the center eco-friendlier and more sustainable over the long term.
- partner with local schools for joint usage of the center and shared maintenance
- encourage the parents, guardians and the community to contribute small donations for the center's upkeep

Sustainability Revenue Model

The sustainability of the Educational ICT Centre will rely on a diversified revenue model that generates funds to cover operational costs, ensure long-term functionality, and provide affordable services to the community. The key revenue streams include:

- Low-cost ICT literacy programs for community members, including youth (18+), women, and smallholder farmers
- Paid training in specialized areas such as coding, graphic design, digital marketing, and video editing for older students (18+) and youth
- Nominal fees for tailored workshops on digital tools for farming, such as weather apps, market access platforms, and farm management software
- Partnership with educational institutions to offer certification programs in ICT and charge a modest enrollment fee
- Rental of the ICT lab for workshops, training, or meetings by local organisations, schools and NGOs
- Providing paid services like printing, scanning, photocopying, and document preparation to local farmers and residents
- Offering affordable internet access for community members who may not have connectivity at home.
- Providing paid access to an online library or educational platforms for advanced learners and students
- A digital marketplace where farmers can pay a small fee to list and sell their agricultural products, including peanuts, to potential buyers.

Cost Estimates

ITEM	UNIT COST (KES)	TOTAL COST (KES)
Wall-mounted computer desks & chairs		
- 10x Computer Desks	5,000.00	50,000.00
- 10x Chairs	3,000.00	30,000.00
- 2x Shelving Units for storage	8,000.00	16,000.00
- 1x Whiteboard for training session	10,000.00	10,000.00
Floor tiling & repairs (16 sq metre)	27,000.00	27,000.00
Wall painting & repairs (Paint, cement, sand, crack fillers)	13,000.00	13,000.00
Computer & Networking		
- 10x Desktop Computers (with basic specs: Intel i5, 8GB RAM, 256GB SSD, 21" monitor)	60,000.00	600,000.00
- 10x Uninterruptible Power Supply (500vA UPS) for each computer	7,500.00	75,000.00
- 1x (Multi-function) Printer/Scanner	25,000.00	25,000.00
- 1x Router	12,000.00	12,000.00
- 1x 16-Port Ethernet Switch	6,000.00	6,000.00
- 50m Ethernet Cables (Cat6)	100.00	5,000.00
- 2x External Hard Drives (1TB for backups)	10,000.00	20,000.00
- Monthly Internet Subscription (First 3 Months)	10,000.00	10,000.00
- 10x MS Office Suite Licenses	10,000.00	100,000.00
GRAND TOTAL		999,000.000

Costs to be assumed by the project:

- Transport of materials
- Wall Repair labour costs including crack filling, plastering, and painting
- Network Installation & Configuration; Internet Connection Setup Fee
- Stationery costs (Pens, notebooks, etc. for training purposes)
- Antivirus Software (Annual subscription for all computers)
- Personnel to manage the centre