



Looking back over the last 10 years since our first Container Library & Learning Centre: Story 7

Diversification is an Opportunity in Disguise

Being an international charity isn't easy. Especially if you don't build schools, dig wells, cure diseases or work with disabled girls. The competition for funds and attention is huge. But I know we matter. I also know that we do things right. And we, as collective, are determined to stay.

What I didn't realise is that while our activities were developed to make Kenyan children's life happier and more imaginative, find home for unwanted books and raise the literacy levels in Kenya, they have an enormous impact on the lives of UK people too. We have more volunteers than most charities and we give everyone something to do, regardless of their skills and abilities. Locations too. Isn't it time we tell the world? Tell Stevenage? Tell the funders?

And so from a necessity and diversity an opportunity was identified. We can and we must level out the playing field. When I sat down and looked at the figures I was pretty surprised. We always make a big deal about the stuff we send to Kenya and the number of people that we help there, but what about the UK? Here are some stats, I hope you will be as pleasantly surprised as I was:

- Saturday Club has 212 members;
- Arts Club has 30 members;
- Knitters across the country totals 279;
- 198 schools donated books;
- 37 Duke of Edinburgh participants chose JBAC to help them reach the award;
- 208 school children participated;
- 3 Scouts groups helped;
- 348 participants are over the age of 65;
- 13 businesses used JBAC for their CSR activities;
- Books and donations arrive from as far as Inverness in North and Devon in the South;
- The furthest donations we received were from Japan, the next was Germany;
- On average 28 individuals help load each shipping container.

I am sure there is more data I haven't collected yet, but you must agree it's a lot. And it is time we raised funding for the UK part of our activities. Material, packaging and refreshments are a big chunk of the cost we need to cover, but storage and working space must be our priority for the next few years. I think 2026 will be a defining year for JBAC - helping the UK side grow will help us reach more Kenyan recipients.