

To: Professor David Toomey, Instructor of ENG 379, Introduction to Professional Writing

From: Julia Bragg, Student

Subject: A Report of Feasibility of Writing and Submitting a Grant Proposal to Seek Funding from The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for the Malala Fund non-profit literacy program, *Literacy for Leaders*

Date: October 31st, 2024

Purpose:

The purpose of this memo is to gauge the feasibility of a grant proposal that will be sent on behalf of non-profit organization, Malala Fund, to The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for a new literacy program, *Literacy for Leaders*. The proposed report will be submitted by the second week of December, outlining the background, research, and financial budget of the proposed project.

Summary:

My proposed grant proposal addressed in this memo will request funding to create a literacy and leadership program for teenage and young adult women in South Sudan who are battling illiteracy, hardship, and gender disparities. The program will be implemented in a specific community in South Sudan with reportedly high rates of women who are out of school and experiencing an immense lack of opportunity. The aim for this program is to allow selected American college students to lead the program, offering expertise in areas like the humanities to create a conducive learning environment to teach South Sudanese women reading, writing, and

comprehension skills. In addition, the students will act as mentors, guiding them in gaining leadership skills, acquiring confidence, and female empowerment. The process would begin by offering applications for currently enrolled undergraduate students in a wide range of disciplines to apply to the program. Selected applicants will create a fundraiser to raise money for physical resources like books, pencils, and workbooks. The remainder of the funding will aim to be provided by The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which will cover travel costs, food and housing, and outstanding finances. The literacy program will last 8-10 weeks, covering a mixture of previously stated skills and lessons with the student mentors reaching out periodically after the conclusion of the program.

Background:

Historically, women have been at the forefront of experiencing a life without education. In economically weak countries such as South Sudan, their opportunities become even more significantly minute, contributing to a society riddled with lost opportunities and a lack of enrichment for women. Not being able to read and write directly invades one's ability to express their feelings, communicate, and encounter the beautiful art of literature. Illiteracy stunts vital emotional, social, and behavioral growth, likely contributing to a sense of isolation and lack of overall personal development. Illiteracy also contributes to a weak economy, where their economic growth is expected to contract by -4.1 percent”(World Bank, 2021). Literacy should be granted to every person as a right of their innate individuality regardless of financial situation, gender, and background. Regardless of education, women in South Sudan are already facing a plethora of hardships and inequalities: They have minimal decision-making power, few land rights, and a lack of accessible resources. As a group that's constantly being underscored and

underestimated, granting them proper education is simply a right for fairness and equal opportunity that Malala Fund aims to incorporate into their community. The Malala Fund's goal is to make a world where every woman can read and write. Their current priorities are supporting education for refugee and displaced children, as well as promoting digital literacy in underserved communities. They also focus on advocacy efforts that aim to eliminate gender disparities in education, combat child marriage, and empower women economically. I aim to confront these hardships head-on by creating a program that focuses on offering solutions to their lack of opportunity, access, and education.

Currently, South Sudan has the third lowest literacy rate in the entire world with “More than 70 percent of South Sudanese are younger than 30 and half can neither read nor write”(USAID, 2024). Due to their previous and ongoing economic issues such as the 2013 civil war, flooding, and humanitarian crises, education has been put at the backbone of their society out of pure force, unfortunately stemming from the lack of power and resources. These events have significantly contributed to this statistic, with more and more women out of school each year. The COVID-19 Pandemic resulted in over 2.4 million people being out of school in 2020(Care International, 2020). Due to the current economic crisis, hope for these women lies in the hands of assistance from countries in better standing and by implementing literacy programs such as *Literacy for Leaders*.

Having a lack of education and literacy creates dire effects on a person's livelihood and experience:

- As a country already experiencing an employment crisis, not being enrolled in school or inability to read and write adds to the lack of qualifications and significantly decreases

potential employment opportunities. Due to “a lack of formal teacher training, unclear career tracks, inconsistent salary payments, and low pay force teachers to leave teaching to find better-paying jobs”(USAID, 2024), South Sudanese women are unable to utilize educated people as both educators and mentors.

- South Sudan’s economic issues and poverty stem from the lack of education and literate population members. The World Literacy Foundation even stated that “long-term GDP growth will stagnate as the proportion of adults with even functional illiteracy increases”(World Literacy Foundation, 2018).
- Illiterate people experiencing health issues are often less willing to seek medical care and prevention.
- Illiteracy creates a vicious cycle of social oppression, making relationships more difficult to create and maintain.
- Lack of reading and writing skills can be viewed as having vulnerability thus increasing the likelihood of violent crimes, especially toward women.

These elements combine to create a country that’s facing severe challenges and missed chances to improve their quality of life. Assistance is vital to improving their livelihoods and education through organizations like the Malala Fund.

As far as my planned research for this proposal, I plan to do a variety of research to further support the necessity of this program as well as the general parameters for funding:

- For this project, I will conduct a wide variety of research to establish the dire need for this problem to be solved and emphasize that my approach will be impactful, beneficial, and best utilize the funding. First, I plan to gather statistical data on illiteracy rates in

specific regions of South Sudan to numerically convey the needs of the population.

Focusing on demographic and literacy data for illiteracy and gender disparities, I intend to utilize sources like UNESCO, UNICEF, or local government reports on education to provide accurate and reliable information.

- To support this data, I would like to add supplemental research to establish the necessity of education for women in third-world countries, emphasizing the importance of equal rights for education.
- Finally, I plan to incorporate case studies of people who have been educated by literacy programs and their outcomes to further emphasize the need for proper education for women in South Sudan. I will reference alternative literacy programs that have been done in South Sudan or other countries to highlight how I would go about doing it differently and make a larger impact to convey the proposed plan of this project.

As someone with 3 years of tutoring, writing, and editing experience, I believe that I would be highly qualified to lead the grant proposal writing process and oversee the specifics of my proposed literacy program. My English BA program focuses heavily on literacy's importance in our communities, highlighting specifically the communication skills and critical thinking that are created from our sense of literacy. Within my coursework, I have developed a deep understanding of the English language, its complex conventions, and writing's impact on our society, therefore equipping me with a widened perspective on how to create a literacy curriculum for those lacking reading and writing skills. Outside my coursework, I have worked as a columnist for the Massachusetts Daily Collegian where I write articles about community issues, social interaction, technology, and mental health, giving me experience in professional

writing in the journalism sector and writing for a range of audiences. My background in journalism would allow me to market and circulate this program to interested college students by posting on social media accounts, writing articles, and holding conferences to explain the importance of this project.

Furthermore, my work as a tutor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst Writing Center has equipped me with a nuanced and expanded skill set of how to mentor and aid students with their sense of literacy. Within the Center, I work with students of different backgrounds, learning disabilities, and ESL students, therefore qualifying me to oversee education for South Sudanese girls who are not familiar with the English language. I am well-versed in taking a collaborative approach to learning and am passionate about making an impact on a community lacking in literacy.

My background in the humanities led me to create this proposed literacy and leadership program, *Literacy for Leaders*, which would include the following elements regarding potential participants:

- The program's teachers/mentors will be college students studying the humanities and social sciences. To ensure they are qualified and eager to be a part of this program, there will be a selective application process which includes an essay submission and interview. Applicants will write a reflective piece on their interest in literacy education, the cultural importance of literacy, and their ideas for supporting the South Sudanese community. Selected applicants will be asked to discuss their experiences with leadership or adaptability in unfamiliar environments in an interview. Applicants with previous

mentoring, tutoring, or work experience are preferred to successfully offer educated support to South Sudanese women.

- Selected students will create detailed fundraising proposals, including specific budget goals, strategies (e.g., community events, partnerships with bookstores or local libraries), and resource allocation (e.g., purchasing books, and notebooks). Along with this, they will collaborate with the Malala Fund to organize events like book fairs or sponsorships from local businesses or bookstores, with a portion of sales going toward the program. The ultimate goal is to partner with book publishers or educational nonprofits to donate books and supplies in order to properly prepare for the program. Once my grant proposal is completed and the budget is established for this program, I will work on narrowing down the specific elements of the application process and proposed fundraising logistics.
- Selected students will also undergo training that further prepares them for this program. Working alongside teachers, professors, and librarians, the students will gain a deeper understanding of teaching English as a second language, how to act as a mentor, and how to navigate the complexities of being in a new environment.

The specifics of the 8-12 week program are dependent on traveling costs, ideal months to travel, and the overall budget for this program. It will be broken down into these main elements and goals:

- There will be an implemented literacy program that focuses on reading comprehension, writing and grammar skills, and building vocabulary. These will come in the form of daily class meetings with mentors collaborating with students to create a conducive learning environment.

- In addition to literacy, this program will aid women in establishing leadership skills and acquiring confidence. Classes will include time spent on leadership skills, such as public speaking, team-building exercises, and conflict resolution, all of which can be taught alongside literacy. Mentors will assign participants to lead group discussions and complete presentations to build confidence.
- Presentations and public speaking practices will come in the form of a cultural exchange where community members can share their lives and traditions, helping to build mutual understanding and respect from student to mentor.
- I plan to pair each mentor with a small group of South Sudanese women to establish a deeper connection. They will encourage activities like sharing stories where each group member can contribute and setting up times to check in one-on-one as well.
- The hope is to allow communication following the program via letter to remain connected and to keep in contact with their lives after having received literacy and leadership training.

Conclusion:

Foundations like the Malala Fund aim to bridge the gap between gender and education, creating a well-rounded and cohesive world where literacy, writing, and leadership skills flourish in every community. By investing in this organization, an impact will be made on a community in dire need to gain literacy. Given the expected time frame of this project, I will be able to outline, research, plan, and write my proposal for this project by the given deadline of December 10th, 2024. I plan to complete research on my project in order to effectively outline the specific parameters and details. I will meet with members of the foundation to discuss financial budgets,

potential issues, startup plans, and marketing strategies for this project. I plan to divide my work to make weekly progress for this proposal.

Proposed Schedule:

Week	Task
November 3rd-November 10th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create an outline for the grant proposal including research/sources ● Conduct research using sources like USAID, World Bank, and UNESCO. ● Write Table of Contents ● Plan AI program implementation
November 11th-November 17th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete research and begin drafting elements of the Front Matter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Title Page ○ Cover Letter ○ Table of Contents
November 18th - November 24th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft Bodies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Statement of the problem ○ Statement of the request ○ Description of proposed work
November 25th-November 28th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft rest of Bodies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Description of measure of project success ○ Description of available facilities ○ Qualifications of personnel ○ Budget
November 29th-November 30th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft End Matter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appendices ○ Bibliography
December 1st-December 3rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continuing drafting/revising AI Implementation, Bodies, and End Matter
December 4th-December 18th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete final revisions, see Professor Toomey during office hours, and submit.

Works Cited

- “Care Works to Fight Poverty and Achieve Social Justice.” *CARE International*, 30 Oct. 2024, www.care-international.org/.
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- “South Sudan Economic Update: Economic Decline, COVID-19, and Conflict Have Negative Impact on Food Insecurity and Livelihoods.” *World Bank*, World Bank Group, 2 July 2021, www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/07/02/south-sudan-economic-update-economic-decline-covid-19-and-conflict-have-negative-impact-on-food-insecurity-and-livelihoods.
- “South Sudan: Protect Progress in Girls’ Education from Pandemic Impacts.” *Oxfam in Horn, East and Central Africa*, heca.oxfam.org/south-sudan-protect-progress-girls%E2%80%99-education-pandemic-impacts. Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.