



followings
foundation

2019 Review



Welcome

Founder message

Lauren Exton

Director Followings
Foundation

Welcome to the 2019 edition of the Followings Foundation Review.

I am pleased to share with you the 2019 highlights of our partnership with Busubi Empowered Communities (BEC). Our partnership brings to life our commitment to community development and sustainable poverty reduction. In 2019, we took our fourth group of volunteers to the village of Busubi to work at the BEC Learning Centre we built in 2017.

Over the nine days on the ground, our projects included, but weren't limited to: the creation of a library, training teachers of a new Leadership Program, a combined Self Expression and Reproductive Health program for youths, mobilising our eleven computers, and providing professional development for the administration staff at the Centre.

The money raised is also funding the delivery of hydro-electricity, for the first time, to 35 houses in the village.

As I type this, we are actively recruiting volunteers for our fifth trip—another fantastic opportunity for folks looking to give back and live for nine days in Busubi from the 14–26 May 2020.

Our primary goals for the upcoming trip include expanding the current programs on offer—Agriculture, Tailoring, Performing Arts, Sports, Computer Studies. These programs are all free to the community and run seven days a week.

We'll also be providing support to Busubi Empowered Communities as they work to move from 100% financial reliance on Followings Foundation to 25% self-funded, 75% Followings Foundation by September, 2020. What an incredible goal they have set themselves! We are humbled and honoured to work alongside their team.

I wish to thank our Creative Engagement Director—Rebecca Boon, for her endless support and our beautiful social media presence, our dedicated Board Members—Liz Lynch and Mel Crehan, our donors, and all of you who have contributed in any way to the success of Followings Foundation over the past year. Thanks to BEC for your excellent reporting and keeping our donors up to date!

I look forward to growing our impact in the communities where we work and live, and continuing to make a difference around the world.

“We are so proud of our commitment to grassroots change. Both partners understand that the goal is neither to give nor receive endlessly, but to grow together. Side-by-side, BEC and Followings Foundation are committed to becoming beacons of change in both Australia and Uganda. Our mutual desire to fundamentally redefine the tired, slow and ineffective approach to Community Development makes us unstoppable.”

- Lauren Exton

Founder & Director

Key partner message

John Ssentamu

Director Busubi Empowered
Communities

It has been a wonderful second year at Busubi Empowered Communities Learning Centre. Along with the expansion of all of our free programs we have seen an increase in students and attendance.

We are so proud of the wonderful teachers that work here and all of the students who attend class and community events here.

The Tailoring Class is really showing dramatic improvement since we welcomed dedicated teacher Milly to our team. She is a skilled seamstress and teacher. Students of all ages, both men and women, learn greatly from her.

Our Sports department continues to be another highlight of our Centre providing many opportunities for boys and girls to practise Soccer, Netball, and, of course, Quidditch. Our team has been invited to the Quidditch World Cup in the USA in July 2020 and preparations have begun for us to source funding for visas and travel costs.

The Music, Dance and Drama team this year have begun to generate income for themselves and the Centre, as they are hired to perform at prestigious events throughout Masaka. We are excited for this program to continue to grow.

Computer Studies continues to draw in students of all ages, and for many of the new students this is the first time they have ever seen a computer. They are amazed and so grateful for the opportunity to learn this new skill.

We can't forget about the delicious meals we shared on the same table as volunteers from Followings Foundation who encouraged us to join them during meal time. We had resisted, but they were insistent and we all grew from the experience!

I particularly need to mention our Centre Manager Prossy Babiye, for her tireless work in encouraging students, creating a welcoming environment and keeping all systems and reporting extremely efficient!

Thank you for supporting our village and the people of Uganda as we strive to grow stronger every day!

Foundation Objectives

“I joined Followings to ‘give back’... to put something under the heading ‘contribution’ on my goals board. It was a push to do something wholesome, that took a bit of work and a fair bit of growth, but I did it hoping someone else would benefit ... and because, rumour has it, I would benefit too.”

- Rebecca Boon
Creative Engagement Director

Objectives

To continue to support and fiscally sponsor the staffing, resourcing and maintenance of BEC Learning Centre as they move towards becoming financially independent.

To build a social license and meaningful connection to communities in which Followings Foundation operates.

To increase the breadth of Followings Foundations’ traditional corporate social responsibilities, ensuring the best possible social and developmental impact.

To create partnerships with non-government organisations and community groups addressing poverty, social disadvantage and environmental protection.

Followings Foundation Board & Staff



Rebecca Boon
Creative Engagement Director



Lauren Exton
Founder & Director



Mel Crehan
Board of Directors Treasurer



Liz Lynch
Board of Directors Secretary



Staff and volunteers from Busubi Empowered Communities



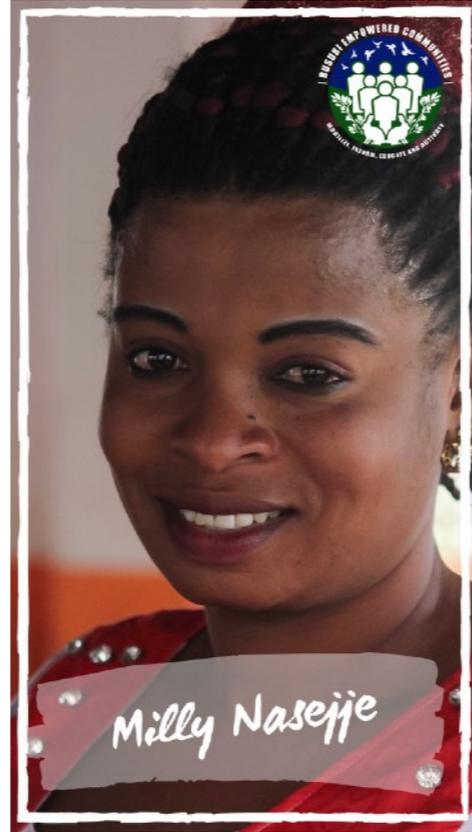
John Ssentamu

Director



Prassy Babirye

Manager



Milly Nasejje

Tailoring



Dickson Andrew

Performing Arts



Ali Kateregga

Computers



Dr Brian Ssenkumba

Medical Volunteer



Paul Nkalubo

Agricultural Volunteer



Joshua Niyomugabo

Security Volunteer



Derrick Ssebuggwawo

Sports Coach Volunteer



Lydia Nasejje

Leadership Volunteer



Vincent Senge

Finance & Savings Volunteer

“A lady enters and she is asked which skill she would like to learn – tailoring, hairdressing, catering for example, and she is able to begin on it right away without being worried of the cost of tuition – it’s free! Life would not have changed in this community if we didn’t have people all over the world that believed in John and Lauren’s vision and supported them to fulfil it.”

- Dr. Ssenkumba Brian
BEC Medical Volunteer



Q1

BEC becomes an accredited training centre

It became official that BEC trainees will sit for national exams and be awarded nationally recognised certificates after successful completion of their Directorate of Industrial Training courses!

Rebecca joins Lauren

An absolute gift from heaven, a Communications professional joins our volunteer-only staff of one and takes it to two! Rebecca is behind all the incredible social media and branding you’ve seen this year. Not to mention the incredible support she gives to Lauren in every other aspect of the business of running a charity.

Girl Parliament

BEC was chosen to pilot a program designed to tackle challenges faced by young women with an emphasis on encouraging solutions that are suggested by the girls themselves. The program supports young women to enact solutions and aims to foster the growth of children who are confident and able to advocate for themselves and their peers.

Q2

Down payment on hydroelectricity for 35 homes

We signed on the dotted line with the contractor to bring hydroelectricity not only to the BEC Learning Centre, but to 35 homes in the village as well! A welcome project to the Computer Studies students, who aren’t able to use the Centre’s 11 computers on rainy or cloudy days!

First full-time teacher

The Centre already had a number of paid, part-time staff, but then they made the excellent decision to employ Maama Millie. She’s a talented seamstress and teacher and class attendance has skyrocketed since she came on board! Visitors to the Centre are astonished by the quality of work being put out by such new students!

Curtain boxes

A small but important upgrade inside the Centre. The curtains were hung by cord and sagging so we set some money aside to have beautiful curtain boxes made by the same local carpenter that built all the sturdy furniture you see in the Centre! Big smiles all round!

Q3

Followings Foundation volunteers spend 9 days

Our July 2019 team—Lexie, Mick, Dave (second time team member), Sandy, Beck and Lauren arrived in Busubi. We helped to build and stock a library, put legs and wheels on our computer stands to increase the multipurpose use of the Centre, facilitate reproductive health conversations with youth, form a youth choir, start researching a local medical clinic, share every meal with the staff of the Centre and play nightly, very lively games of Uno—just a few of the things we got up to!

Leadership program rolls out

Dave not only led a group of apprentice carpenters while on his second trip to Busubi, he and John launched a brand new Leadership program curriculum led by volunteers within the community.

Slovakian volunteers bring joy

BEC and Followings hosted two volunteer teachers from Slovakia for a week of engaged learning, skill building and cultural exchange—how awesome!

We mourn the loss of wonderful volunteer, Carla.

Too young, only 28, TV producer, writer, former Followings volunteer and all round beautiful, vibrant person, Carla Bellomarinno was taken from her friends and family after suffering an acute cardiac arrest. In 2020 BEC will introduce a Film and Television scholarship in her honour.

Q4

Expansion of Tailoring and Performing Arts programs

After submitting a successful proposal, both the Tailoring and Performing Arts programs were expanded. We added new sewing machines, and supplied fabrics, costumes, instruments and other resources. Both of these programs now have the capacity to create revenue for the Centre—self-sustainability here we come!

John travels to the UK

The Director of Busubi Empowered Communities and our key partner, liaison, and interpreter, John Ssentamu was invited to represent Ugandan educators at a conference in London! Followings was delighted to sponsor his visa application and legal fees and see him successfully approved and on his first ever flight for his first trip outside Uganda’s borders. Of course John filled his four short days in the UK with knowledge and networking!

End-of-year celebration

To celebrate the year’s achievements, BEC held a party for the staff & students of the Centre. By all reports, there was much cheer, many Mountain Dew’s and lots and lots of meat roasting! Well deserved!

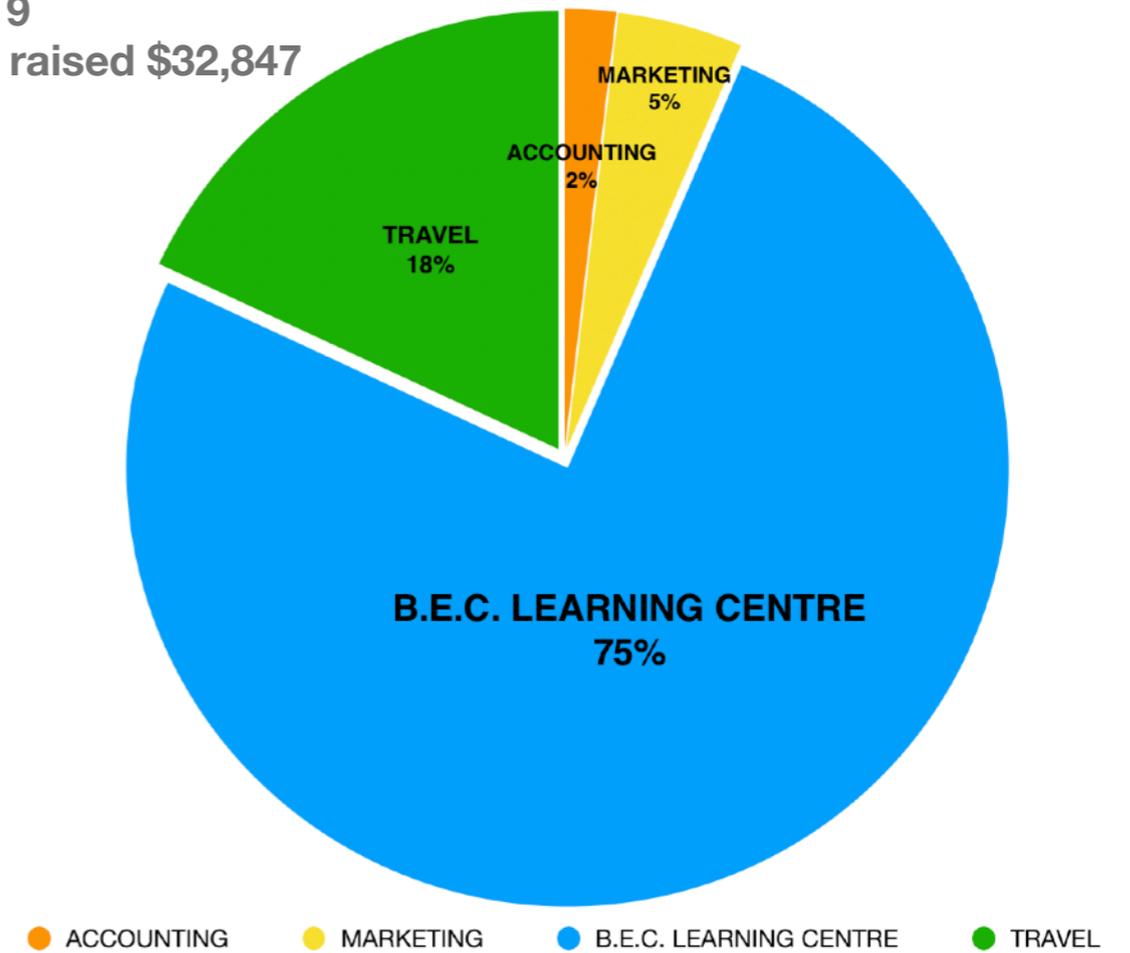
Fundraising & Spending

It only costs us \$7 to raise \$100 and that puts us in the
A for Excellent
 ranking with leading charity watchdog—CharityWatch.org

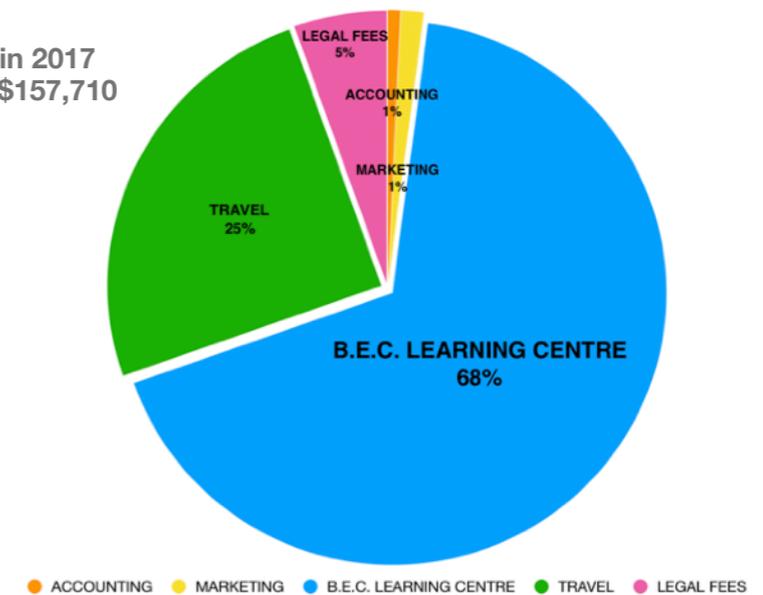
See our detailed 2019 profit and loss statement at www.followingsfoundation.org
 and check out our new website while you're there!



2019
 We raised \$32,847



Since launch in 2017
 We've raised \$157,710



The story so far...

In February 2017 John and Lauren discussed John's ideas for a community centre.

There was a suggestion that she could build a website to support him in his vision. Instead, they decided she would form a charity, bring a team of people to Uganda for nine days in November and raise enough money to build John's dream—the **Busubi Empowered Communities Learning Centre**.

In **November 2017 Followings took its first team to Busubi**. Workshops with the community were held, villagers learned to make reusable sanitary pads, empowering brainstorming sessions took place, and the contract on the building was signed and paid for.

By May 2018, when Followings' second team arrived, the BEC Learning Centre was complete, **resplendent** in blue and green.

We **installed solar power**, contracted a local carpenter to build a blackboard and sturdy desks and chairs, purchased three **sewing machines**, two laptop computers and **began paying staff** to teach **free classes** at the Centre—tailoring, sports, music, dance, drama, agriculture and computer studies.

By the end of our third trip in October/November 2018, there were **12 computers**, a **30 000L water tank**, beautifully maintained gardens, an agricultural loan scheme, a **high-powered projector** hung from the ceiling and even more solar power!

In **July 2019** we took our fourth team to Busubi. Some volunteers had been back two, even three times at this point. They were part of the family now. The Centre had been open for just over a year offering **free classes, seven days a week**. They had just become **accredited** by the Directorate of Training to run nationally approved examinations and issue nationally recognised certificates of study.

Our fourth team partnered with the community to provide **hydroelectricity to the village** and to build and stock **a library** at the Centre. We injected funds into **expanding the Tailoring and Performing Arts programs**. Education will always be our number one priority.

In February 2020 as Lauren and Rebecca recruit the **fifth team to spend Nine days in May**, living and working in the village, it's **wonderful** to look back on all that we've achieved together.

Thank you for your support, as we support **the village of Busubi** in their goal to change their circumstances and brighten the future of their most **cherished loved ones**.



Social Media

★

“The volunteer program was well planned and there was fantastic participation from local community and volunteers.”

Ross // 3 time volunteer




“I HAVE NEVER DONE ANYTHING IN MY LIFE THAT IS SO REWARDING”

Melissa

Dance Troupe Costume

\$11




“Travel far enough, you meet yourself.”

David Mitchell




JOIN US

FOUR PLACES LEFT

14-26 May 2020

Follow Followings!

 @followings.love

 @followings.foundation

 Followings Foundation

★

“I have never known such fulfilment, helping this community of beautiful souls was so humbling.”

Mick // 2019 volunteer

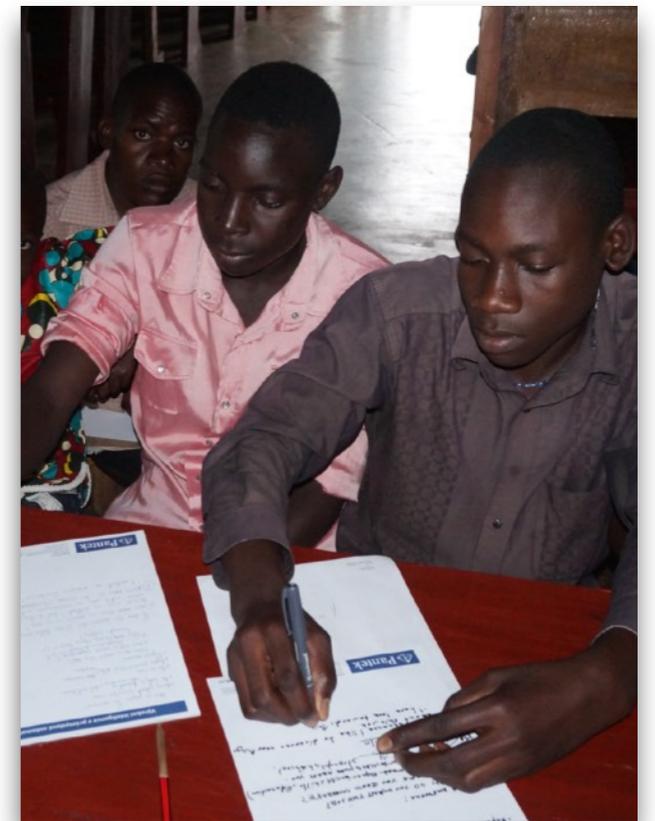



“Only those who risk going too far can possibly find out how far they can go.”

T.S. Elliot









followings foundation

Leap now, your wings will follow.

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FUNDER FOLLOWINGS
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