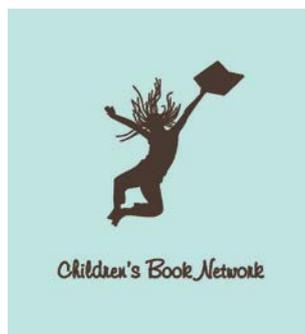




## **CBN & SWEDEN:**

**A cooperation of book people**



## Contents:

### Page

1	Thank you
2	Red Hill Workshop
3	Kayamundi workshop (Stellenbosch)
3	Stellenbosch University
4	Round table discussions
4	Meetings with other organizations
5	Conclusions
6	Positive results
7	New ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bringing story out of Africa to Sweden</li><li>• SA Book donation to Sweden</li><li>• The virtual translation project</li><li>• Let's talk about US!</li><li>• Toolboxes – real and virtual</li><li>• Book donations</li><li>• Children's book choice – and prize</li><li>• One village, one book ...</li></ul>
8	Keeping focus
9	Reactions from Swedish participants

## Summary:

During the first two weeks of October CBN hosted five Swedish visitors, four librarians and a drama teacher, working with them and learning from them in different venues where children's books are critically important. We began at Red Hill informal settlement with a two-day workshop for 25 children between 10 and 12 years old and a story festival attended by about 70 children of all ages. We also worked with younger children at Luthando crèche in Kayamundi township outside Stellenbosch. In addition we gave a guest lecture to around 300 trainee teachers at Stellenbosch University and had several very strategic meetings with organizations and individuals involved with children's books in South Africa.



**Thank you:**

*There are two words that have to be said first: Thank you! The interest from the four wonderful Swedish librarians and the one wonderful drama teacher has given a tremendous push to an idea that was only in infancy when they joined us. As a direct result of the planning for this October workshop in South Africa, we have reached a stage of development that was not even imagined when we began. You helped us to consolidate our thinking into a plan of direct action that we have tested to the full the two weeks of the workshops. We have learned a huge amount from watching you giving workshops and telling stories. Thank you also to Mary Cadogan and Hugh Clarke, the two significant supporters of CBN from Ireland, who gave huge support, both technical and administrative. Our thanks to Rotary Cape of Good Hope and Rotary Skelleftea who handled the financial details for us and particularly to SIDA and Swedish Arts and Culture who funded the visit. Marguerite Macrobert handled arrangements within Stellenbosch University and Henriette Loubser of the Education Faculty library and Renee Nathanson, Education Faculty lecturer and literacy activist joined our round table discussions. Katharina and Pieter of The Beautiful South guesthouse facilitated the visit to Luthando crèche and Liz Danks was (as always) a pillar of support in the Red Hill community. Richard Parsons and Jenny and Frank Howitt assisted with generous hospitality and moral support. Susan Alexander hosted a fascinating discussion at Masiphumelele library, as did Sunitha Amod at Biblionef. Carole Bloch of PRAESA took time to talk to us about her work and Sindiwe Magona joined us to discuss translation and other projects. Jay Heale gave an overview of South African publishing and John Parkington delivered a fascinating talk on the early stories of the San people. Women Unite gave a wonderful story performance on Saturday, which gave the children an opportunity to dance, drum – and breathe. It was a very busy two weeks, but extremely positive. The sharing has begun.*

October 2012 workshops:

### 1 Red Hill informal settlement

We reached directly about 70 children between 10 and 12 (and a few older ones) in Red Hill informal settlement, 25 of them on each full day of the workshop. Attendance at both was 100% of the registered children. Many, many other smaller children joined in on an informal basis and all of them had stories and fun. Some additional children also attended the Saturday story day with Andrea Dondolo and Thandi Swartbooi and were deeply involved in their workshop. Book-related gifts circulated throughout the community and a book donation of about 300 carefully chosen South African books was made to the Red Hill library as well as some special book gifts and toys from Sweden. Each child took home a book of their own in a book bag, a notebook and a pen for future work. The books that they made during the workshop will be kept at the library where they can add additional pages and fill their books. We also had a mapping project that will be displayed in conjunction with the photo essay made by the older workshop participants in June. The plan is to make a digital story from the many beautiful photographs taken by the children and to tape a voice-over from the writing produced in *Red Hill Writing*. Several laminated copies of this will be available in the new library. Writing from the October workshop will appear on our website which is now being tested and completed for launch before the end of November.

Although we were unable to take an active part in the library refurbishment due to delays in container deliveries, CBN has promised to be involved when the move actually happens and will display the work from the two Red Hill workshops and assist with decorating and painting. In addition, the Swedish visitors were able to offer a huge amount of advice and encouragement to the librarian at the community library, Asakhe Bakajana, and her colleague Buyiswa Ponti who attended on every day and paid close attention to the methods and activities. Perhaps most important of all, the critical nature of books and stories, as well as libraries, was demonstrated in a community that has only just been given access to books near their homes. The library shot to prominence with the workshops that were watched from a distance by many of the adults living there.



## **2 Kayamundi Township in Stellenbosch**

Our second week, in Stellenbosch, gave the visitors the opportunity to work with around 50 younger children at a crèche in Kayamundi. We were taken there under the auspices of the Swedish *The Beautiful South* guesthouse proprietors, Katharina and Pieter, who are involved with the crèche in an extremely practical, ongoing way. Katharina gave us an insight into the problems – and the history of solving them – and introduced us to the principal who is, for obvious reasons, known universally as Mama (Florence), and her husband Madiba.

It was interesting to compare the reaction of children in a ‘school’ situation with those from an informal settlement during school holidays. The visitors were able to work with the little children in an atmosphere of calm and everyone was deeply impressed by how well the crèche was run and how effective it clearly is. The absolute joy of story is reflected in the faces of the young children who took part – as well as on the faces of the Swedish storytellers. The visit was a delight.

We will be in touch with the crèche when we have some books for this age group. They were an extremely positive and exhilarating group to work with and we were all fortified by the idea that small initiatives like this are thriving all over South Africa – and need more acknowledgement.

## **3 Stellenbosch University**

### **Guest lecture**

As a result of the CBN connection with Stellenbosch University Education Department (in the person of education lecturer Marguerite Macrobert) we were invited to give a guest lecture to about 300 trainee teachers who had just finished their practical training in local schools. We were asked to particularly address the importance of story in education and to demonstrate how exciting story could be in a classroom situation.

Lesley gave a brief outline of what CBN is going to do in the future and then the Swedish visitors took over with an incredible demonstration of what they do and how they work with children in a library situation in Sweden. There were four presentations, ranging from the academic to the pure fun and finishing with a dramatization of a book promotion (The Gruffalo) that had the students startled out of their seats.

The message that was repeated in each presentation was that less is sometimes more. The *Give me Five* project and the *One City One Book* in particular struck a strong cord. *Numbers* of books is not always the answer. Focussing on a title that has real relevance to a community gives that community, and everyone in it, a shared book experience. The presentation on reading workshops with babies of four months and their mothers (and, more daringly, fathers as well) interested everyone. The message about the involvement of libraries in communities and families as well as the lives of individuals was well made.

## Round table discussions in Stellenbosch

After the lecture, we had the opportunity to meet and talk to Marguerite and some of her university colleagues, including Renee Nathanson who is an integral part of the Partnerships Achieve Literacy team that offers support and support in literacy teaching and who is also on the Rotary Literacy Programme advisory board. Henriette Loubser librarian in the Stellenbosch Faculty of Education Library and Halle Tschlana of the English Department also joined us.

We had the opportunity to discuss and evaluate the workshops and to start thinking about the future and how CBN could work with our amazing Swedish supporters in the future.

## Meetings with other organizations

### PRAESA

Carole Bloch, Director of PRAESA came to dinner with us in Kalk Bay and gave a very useful oversight of the work that PRAESA is doing, particularly their new reading clubs, Nali'Bali with Avusa Publishing.

### Bibliodef

We visited Bibliodef one morning and were shown around the truly impressive collection of books in indigenous languages and given an outline of where, and how Bibliodef is instrumental in bringing books to children in their own languages.

### Bookchat Website

Jay Heale, one of South Africa's leading experts on children's books gave an inspiring talk on what is available – and in which languages – and brought some of the books, which were fallen upon and studied with interest.

### Masiphumelele Library (Susan Alexander) and Fish Hoek Library.

We were delighted (and not a little astounded) by the range of activities carried out in the community by this library and it's passionate team. This library does a huge amount within the Masiphumelele community and is an inspiring example of what can be achieved with hard work and dedication.



## Conclusions at this point:

Sweden and South Africa have common goals and common problems. One of the stereotypes that need to be overturned is the one that pictures perfect Swedish libraries in problem-free communities. We discussed how immigrants from elsewhere are in desperate need of stories and books that relate to their experiences. South Africa has such books, although they are not always very obviously promoted – and we can share some of the universal experiences not only of storytellers, writers and librarians – but of *children*.

The other stereotype that needs to be overturned is that nothing is being done about reading in South Africa. This is simply not true. The statistics tell a damning story (93% of schools do not have libraries, and that is intolerable) but organizations like PRAESA, Biblionef and many others are working hard to correct the imbalances. CBN has always hoped to make connections between these initiatives stronger and more sustaining through positive outreach on our website and working together.

The general reading problems remain the same – but so do the solutions. We can, and must, work together and share ideas and skills.

- Children worldwide are not reading.
- The cost of books has escalated, especially in own-language.
- There is also a global need to train teachers in the concept that books are *essential* to education, not an optional extra.



## POSITIVE RESULTS

CBN is a new organization – less than a year old. Without the encouragement and support of our Swedish colleagues, we would not have achieved as much. The funding from SIDA and Swedish Arts and Culture galvanized us into action with a pilot project in Red Hill in June. The planning and advance documentation for the October workshops clarified thinking around the goals and desired outcomes for CBN and the practical, hands-on nature of the workshops inspired new thinking and ideas.

In order to grow, an organization has to DO something. We can now share what we have tried to achieve with other organizations, colleagues and potential funders. The Swedish workshops really helped to give us a base for the future – something we are looking forward to with great excitement.

We also enjoyed the opportunity of introducing our Swedish colleagues to others working with children and reading during a series of formal and informal meetings and discussions. This helped to raise the profile of CBN and begin the long process of networking with every person and group who share a love of children and books.



## NEW IDEAS

Several projects have been discussed as the workshop progressed and we are looking forward to developing these plans.

### **Bringing story out of Africa to Sweden**

A plan to share the stories of Africa – and not just the traditional ones, but stories of contemporary children too - and to exchange and develop stories from both countries that have relevance to young people everywhere. These will also be on the website as a free-access resource for anybody who needs them, anywhere.

### **SA Book donation to Sweden**

CBN would like to put together an African Collection of the gems that are often hidden in reading schemes or supplementary readers. Books that are published in this format don't reach review pages or book collections but there are many of them that deserve to be brought to children elsewhere. CBN intends to take some of them to Sweden in 2013 to share with children there.

### **The virtual translation project**

We are hoping to work with Biblionef and PRAESA (with their new Nali'Bali Book Club project and the Sunday Times and other newspapers) to facilitate translation of short books and texts that can be downloaded freely from the CBN website.

This project has been a pillar of CBN thinking from the beginning and will involve translation into local languages of stories onto the website as well as book donation (in English and in own languages when available) to libraries in communities and schools

- San stories
- African tales
- Modern African stories
- The stories of our children



### **Let's talk about US!**

Children's writing for the CBN website that will form an archive of childhood – a place where people (concerned adults, other children) can listen to what children have to say about their own lives. This could be a means of exchange with Swedish children – a way of showing that many experiences are universal to children everywhere.

### **Toolboxes**

We are beginning to put together some ideas for teachers and librarians that will help them to focus on a limited number of titles and use them to best advantage with their readers. These could be both virtual toolboxes on the website and real boxes with materials, toys like finger puppets and books that will offer exciting ideas about how to teach a love of story and books; skills as well as stories

### **Book Donation**

We are already being asked for books from as far afield as KwaZulu Natal and Eastern Province (as a result of an article about CBN in various newspapers) and this will continue. We certainly need to look at funding for specific books around the workshops and toolboxes that we plan.

### **Children's Book Choice**

We want to find the best-loved (as opposed to the best-selling) books that children want to read, and enjoy. This can be linked to both the book donation and the book translation projects and would hopefully result in a Children's Book Award. This is also an idea to discuss with Sunday Times and PRAESA.

### **One village one book ...**

Based on the model of One City One Book in Sweden, this idea has already been warmly received in those working with libraries in a rural district of the Cedarberg Mountains. The Clanwilliam Municipality has invited us to be involved with seven isolated libraries during 2013 and to work towards a larger project for 2014 when Clanwilliam will celebrate its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### **Keeping focus**

All of these ideas are attractive and exciting but we are well aware that we have to stay focused on the main principles of CBN: Workshop, Website and Book Donation. Our core business remains Books to Children and Children to Books. That's the dream.



### **Contact people**

For CBN: Lesley Beake - [lesley@lesleybeake.co.za](mailto:lesley@lesleybeake.co.za)

For Sweden: Rose-Marie Lindfors - [rm.lindfors@gmail.com](mailto:rm.lindfors@gmail.com)

## Reactions from Swedish participants:

### **From Synneva Byrkjeland:**

When I think back on my visit, I can see the positive things. I see kids that we met in Red Hill before my eyes and I think of all the hugs, spontaneity, dreams, joys and the stories they shared with us. At one point, we sang songs in Swedish with movements with a smaller group and afterwards they began spontaneously singing at Xhosa and dance to. They invited us in their songs and dances. Lesley said I was all red in the face when I came out of the room. It was exhausting, but very fun at the same time. The thought occurred to me that we are so much alike. It does not matter what language we speak, what God we believe in, what color we have on the skin, whether we are young or old, what country we live in – we are all human!

### **From Gunilla Brinck:**

Ideas and methods:

We had ideas and methods in our toolbox; together with our South African friends we created new tools. If one dare to let go of control and let the children's questions and ideas lead the way, listen to their desires and creativity ... more positive image of Africa, which I can tell about: Yes, all the good and powerful forces that really wants to lift children and their opportunities.

What we did not know we needed to learn:

"It takes a village to raise a child" We must see each child. Look them in the eyes. Do not be so quick to look for the parent. What is this child's perspective? A reminder to step out of "the comfort zone" and really analyze what it means for our children's library.

My prejudices are confronted:

Hard to put into words. Sure, I have prejudices, but I try to be open and allow myself to confront and try to reflect on all the time.

I want to be surprised:

To be able to not be in a hurry, and try to let go of all preconceived intention.

### **From Maria Nordenback:**

What in the end struck me the most was the similarities between South Africa and Sweden. We have the same problems, but not for the same reasons. The reading skills decreases and reading as a leisure activity are not that popular with our young children, although we have a lot of good books to read available in their mother tongue as well in the languages of our immigrants.

I work at a library where children from all over the world go to school and visit the library. When visiting the library in the township of Kayamundi I was reminded of what difference a good library can do, in welcoming and aiding people to participate in the society. From that experience I have a lot to learn.

Then I also had a lot of fun! When I was invited to dance and play with the children of Red

Hill, when I sang together with the children at the Kindergarten in Stellenbosch and when we acted part of the story of the Gruffalo at the University of Stellenbosch. That was fun for me too! Although you not always understand the language you can communicate through dancing, singing and acting – and all the other cultural expressions that we are gifted with.

When I got back to Sweden and watched the photographs from South Africa I knew I'll always carry the beautiful nature of South Africa with me, the drama of the scenery with the high mountains and the colorful gardens of Cape Town and Stellenbosch. It is an exciting country with open-minded people. Everybody we met, the taxi drivers, the vineyard guide, our hosts and the librarians, were very forward with their thoughts about the future of South Africa. I really appreciate how they let me in to their concerns about their home country and the big hopes everyone has for South Africa. And I can only agree!

### **Anna Hallgren:**

Some keywords from the trip and exchange:

Openness, warmth, curiosity, desire to learn more, learn and find new ways / ways of working, joy of singing, music, stories, and charitable meetings, dreams and hopes for a better future and that everyone can work on it, pride in their house / land and their friends. Getting outlooks do mean so much. Getting the distance to ones own life. To challenge oneself. To concretize and show in action what you are passionate about. To dare to open up to new ways of working. To see other realities and broaden perspectives. To discover similarities despite differences. Daring to stand up for the rights of children! Wanting to meet and develop. To be inspired by others' courage and challenges. Trying to find sustainable solutions in collaboration with the CBN. To stand up for the children's rights, adults who can play and meet children in their situation in life, adults who want to listen and share stories, thoughts and dreams. Getting to meet other enthusiasts who also are passionate about children and reading!

Workshop in Red Hill. Important to continue working with the children and offer ongoing workshops, support to the small library, make further contacts with Masi for the development of library work. Would love to come back and work more with reading, discuss literature, book gigs and do storytelling and theatre. Children in Red Hill need good adult role models and people that can inspire them to read and encourage them to believe in themselves and their dreams! Andrea and her friends' presence on Saturday was a great success and I hope she has the opportunity to come back as reading ambassador and work more with the kids. The highlight of Red Hill was also the exchange with songs, dances and stories between us and the children.

Library Masiphumelele -Very good visit and fun to get to meet these enthusiasts. Impressive Libraries work! Would like to have had a full day of experience there and also worked with the library and organized programs / workshops. Kayamundi was inspiring in many ways. Children's stunning vocals on the Rights went right into the heart. Amazing staff that give children a good foundation. Will remember with warmth; exchange with songs, rhymes and stories between us and the kids. Everything goes, even if we have no common language, more than a few words of English!

## **Rose-Marie Lindfors**

All we met were so open and curious and I felt that we all wanted the same thing; it felt like we were colleagues directly, like we always had worked together. Everything was done in good intentions. Meetings in the songs, the chants, the stories, the creation of texts all that was done was in communication with each other, openly and honestly. Preschools in Kayamundi where the kids were so proud and strong in their identities, where it also became a cultural meeting, with songs, rhymes and fairy tale.

Ideas and techniques from the workshop in Red Hill on Saturday to use body movement and then a few words to explain the meaning of "the little light I have."

It was so clear that fantasy role must be restored worldwide. And that storytelling is so important to reading and to strengthen identity, in Sweden and in South Africa.

More positive image of Africa, which I can tell about - I have a very positive image of Africa, of the curiosity, openness, joy of life and optimism. And the feeling of "time" is so different, and we need to experience that, we who are from these time-efficient countries.

What we did not know we needed to learn - there are so many good people around the world who want to work for a better world, to strengthen the rights of children, and who want to do good things. That it's possible to open up a library in your own living room, as Buyiswa had done. And that she thinks it's necessary, and needed. I want to be surprised - I am often surprised by children who do the unexpected, who dare to act despite fear, who dare to challenge their comfort zones. I saw the pride, strength and power of the people of Red Hill. Basse (the drummer) who came to me, in town, and said that he had a drum that I might need. Transparency of work - art of improvising, not to plan too much, to take what comes, be able to think about, when necessary, to see that it was good anyway. That it was so easy to adapt to the circumstances.

Building bridges and open borders, dismantle barriers: between generations, between libraries and schools and other institutions, between countries, between languages.

All we did was building bridges, opened up, we played with the children - Lesley pointed out that they were not used to adults playing and that it had been so important to them. That we have so similar needs, in Sweden and in South Africa. Grateful for what we have - yes, grateful that I got to meet these amazing people who make so much of so little. To see how much we can do via a network, if all are open to share knowledge and experiences.

Eye openers - to see how Rotary worked, quick and effective, that they saw what CBN needs. That we need to get into teacher training; we can make a difference there. That we can start thinking processes. That imagination is so important today!

Share educational ideas – the meeting with CrocE and with Andrea and her drummer and dancer, I got lots of new ideas.

Tales and stories from you - Have got several stories through books.

Network construction, how they get it to work - by being open, honest, curious and willing to share to open channels to all others who want to help build this new network. Find the right institutions, by linking to them good people, tell them the needs and the will, and then it all started. "Givers Gain" - the more you give the more you get back.

What we take with us from South Africa?

The imagination is so important! That we need to create more space for the imagination, to restore the status of imagination! The imagination and narrative needed to provide rich

reading experiences.

That the adults are extremely important for children's desire to read. We need to "infect" children with our love of books. And we need to open the doors for the kids, give them fuel for their own fantasy and imagination. We need to invite the reading experiences through stories. To provide children with the tools to build self-esteem, identity and pride. To inspire them to do things they may not have thought they would do. Asking the right questions, open questions to get kids to think their own thoughts, make their own decisions and find the urge to tell.

Good to hear new stories, from other parts of the world, giving wider experience and new ideas.

Important that children can put words to their future dreams.

- Allowing the children to tell their stories. Sharing stories.
- The stories build bridges.
- Illustrator Role important!
- That every person has a story worth telling, and furthermore every step you take contains story, every action, every choice, opens up a new story.

And I also want to say thanks to you Lesley, and to all the others that we meet, thank you for sharing these days and those experiences with us! For arranging this three weeks, filled with inspiration and great memories. Thank you for hospitality, for sharing thoughts and stories. You all do a very important work!

Rose-Marie Lindfors and the team.



*(Extracts form more detailed report from Swedish participants that is available on request.)*

November 2012.