

ROLIC CONCEPT PAPER

Objective:

For the Innovation Challenge, Durham University's LWOB Student Division chose to focus on the category of Wildlife Crime, designing an educational 'talking book' to convey the issue of poaching and its implications to children of reading age.

We have thus created a three part storybook series titled 'Akina and Elewisa's Wildlife Adventures' where across three different storylines, the main human characters, Akina and Elewisa, encounter different endangered species in Kenya. The animals we chose to focus on are the African Bush Elephant, the African Lion and the Wild Dog. While we only illustrated the Elephant storyline, we have worked on the storyline, dialogue, and preliminary illustrations for other two animals as well.

In addition to the storybooks, we created a Teaching Guide for mentors helping the children read the book, and educational posters and activities for the kids. We thought the Teaching Guide was important to create as it will equip the mentor of the child with more diligently researched information in regards to the environmental and economic impacts of the trafficking and poaching of species in savanna-ridden climates in Africa, specifically in Kenya. The activities and posters are aimed to develop the child's understanding of the complex issue of poaching through visual aids.

The Reality of Poaching in Kenya:

1. Current Kenyan legislation –

Legislation in Africa as a whole has progressed rapidly over the past 10 years in push to criminalise and fully punish those who are poaching and trafficking animals and animal parts across the continent. The majority of animal trafficking and the illegal trade of ivory occurs in South East Asia where there is a demand for the ivory as it is used in traditional medicine and for display pieces. Action is being taken to raise awareness in both Africa and Asia about the damage these practises are having to the natural world. Kenya is one example where poaching, trafficking and the illegal trade of ivory is rife. Julius Kamau, the executive direction of East African Wildlife Society, said to Africa Renewal that "Poaching has damaged the wildlife population in Kenya, with fears that some species could be pushed into extinction."¹

Kenya introduced the Wildlife Conservation Act in 2013 which established high penalties of up to US\$200,000 for wildlife crime and imprisonment for those found to have killed endangered species. There was much misinformation spread in the recent years about Kenya making a move to impose the death penalty for those found or have engaged in Wildlife crime, however this has proven to be false.²

¹ Benjamin Durr, 'Conservationists Take Aim At Poachers | Africa Renewal' (*Un.org*, 2017) <<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/may-july-2017/conservationists-take-aim-poachers>> accessed 24 April 2020.

² Jane Dalton, 'Wildlife Poachers In Kenya 'To Face Death Penalty' (*The Independent*, 2018) <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/poachers-kenya-wildlife-death-penalty-capital-punishment-najib-balala-a8349966.html>> accessed 24 April 2020.

2. Actions being taken –

The establishment of the Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS) ‘brought about a considerable improvement in wildlife security and helped to stabilize the wildlife and tourism sectors’. This is a state-established body, legitimised by the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act (CAP 376) No. 16 1989. It has powers conferred by the Kenyan government to enforce legislation surrounding wildlife crime, as is the organisation from which Akida, the story’s law-enforcement officer, hails.

Its Director general, John Waweru, outlined some of the policies being undertaken by the KWS to reduce the national poaching problem:

‘Our law enforcement units have embarked on structure engagement with local communities, private ranches, and other conservation stakeholders to counter poaching threats and other wildlife crimes.’³

The book shows how all of these tools could be utilised to help save vulnerable animals, along with continued research into the behaviour and patterns of the animals.⁴

Kenya and South Africa have been working to set up laboratories where DNA collected from stolen ivory and game meat can be traced back to specific animals. These are being used as clear proof of illegal poaching and are helping in the prosecution of these crimes.⁵ Increasingly, technology is also being successfully implemented to track poaching activities, in the form of ‘connected conservation’ schemes, which use ‘Sensors, CCTV, wifi, and biometrics to detect unusual activity’.⁶ This has been successfully implemented in both Zambia and South Africa.

Whilst much work has and is currently being done to tackle these crimes, the remote nature of the attacks has made it difficult to police. This is why bringing greater awareness surrounding the topic to these rural areas is necessary in order to eradicate wildlife crime in Africa and protect these endangered species. Despite the success of Kenya’s national efforts, similar efforts have not been mirrored in its neighbouring Somalia, and hence this border provides a successful port for animal traffickers. As such, an international effort, as is being pioneered by the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) is required to truly combat wildlife crime. Recently, action by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) has also been ‘coordinating and offering support with transnational crime’ to combat disparities between the national law of different African countries.

Akina and Elewisa’s Wildlife Adventures:

The main reason for creating a different storybook for each endangered species was to create a more in depth and easy to understand learning experience for the children reading them. We took the view that incorporating different species into one storyline may have resulted in an overly complicated narrative story. We felt this would take away from the underlying message of the book series, which is to increase awareness within the target audience of the importance of and the impact on local communities of those endangered species. This also allowed us to address the issues faced by a broader group of stakeholders who are affected by the presence of these endangered species. For instance, the elephant storyline expresses the human

³ Fiesta Warinwa, 'Fighting Wildlife Trade In Kenya | United Nations' (*United Nations*)

<<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/fighting-wildlife-trade-kenya>> accessed 24 April 2020.

⁴ Charlotte Pointing, 'How Kenya’S Wildlife Poaching Dropped By 90% In 6 Years' (*LIVEKINDLY*, 2020)

<<https://www.livekindly.co/kenya-wildlife-poaching-dropped/>> accessed 24 April 2020.

⁵ Benjamin Durr, (n 1).

⁶ Fiesta Warinwa (n 3).

perspective of a rural farmer and an employee of a paper making company on the issue, whilst in the lion storyline, the characters are mainly focused on the perspective of a tourism worker.

In the storybooks, we have incorporated a consistent and simple narrative plot to ensure that the content of the stories is easily understandable to the children. A clear beginning, middle, and end are expressed in the stories. The storylines all start with the main endangered species character searching for food with their families. The climax then occurs when the animal character is separated from their family because of destructive human activities. This separation prompts the lost animal's encounter with our main human protagonists, Akina and Elewisa. After this, all three characters engage in a conversation about their perspectives on the human and endangered animal conflict. The ending involves a discussion on the plausible solutions to this issue, and for the animal friend to be reunited with their family.

This rather optimistic ending to the books was chosen both because of the young audience we're targeting our books at and to, more importantly, express to the children the plausibility of the different solutions to the conflict expressed in the stories. Though poaching is a criminal offence in Kenya, as per The Wildlife (Conservation and Management) Act of 1976, it is still a prevalent issue. Therefore, we thought it would be important to not only highlight the illegality of it, but recommend alternatives to poaching - such as building fences around crops or looking into animal conservatories.

This repetitive storyline was used as it has proven to be successful amongst popular children's storybooks, for example 'the Rainbow Magic storybooks', in prompting children to want to collect the different books, which in 'Wildlife Adventurer's' case, would result in the child wanting to learn about the different endangered species.

Vernacular and Style of Writing Used in the Books:

In order to best spread awareness of the complex issues addressed in the storybook, extensive research was carried out in producing storybooks that were appropriately adapted to resonate with children ranging from 4-6 years of age, or the literacy levels of 2-3 (according to the OECD guidelines).⁷ A choice was made to have the three storylines targeted towards slightly different age groups, consisting of 6-8 years (or literacy level 2) for the elephant storybook, and 8-10 years (or literacy level 3) for the lion and wild dog story. The reason the age/reading level difference is important to note is due to the choice of language and themes that the different storylines carry. For instance, the lion and wild dog stories contain a carnivorous aspect to them, which may be a sensitive and complex topic for a younger audience. This is important to take into account when deciding which books to give the child to read and when. The different books are marked with either a blue or a red star, with the former indicating it is for children at the literacy level of 2, and the latter indicating it is for children at the literacy level of 3.

In relation to the language, the overall choice of words had been influenced by the three most popular reading guidelines used by schools and children's books authors consisting of the 'Guided Reading Level (GRL)', the 'Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)' and finally the 'Lexile Measures'. An example of how this influenced the choice of words in Wildlife Adventures, is that it encouraged the use of shorter and more simple terms in the elephant storyline, in comparison to the lion and wild dog stories, which incorporated more complex

⁷ 'Adult Literacy - OECD' (*Oecd.org*, 2020) <<http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/adultliteracy.htm>> accessed 24 April 2020.

and longer sentences. Equally, taking example from the reading guidelines, the choice was made to highlight advanced terms in the storybooks which were subsequently referenced in a glossary page at the end of the books. This allows the child to more efficiently learn the content expressed in the books, all the while pushing the child's development of new and useful vocabulary.

Swahili Translation:

We researched into the languages spoken in Kenya to find that its 'mother tongue' was both English and Swahili. While many schools teach in English, we appreciate that for many it is easier to learn in your first language, especially for children. So, we worked with our partner firm to find a Swahili translator and prototype reader to produce the text in both English and Swahili. The use of both languages gives the book a wider audience appeal, and thus the book is more accessible. This helps to fulfil the aim of the brief as the increased accessibility means the message of the story can reach more people. This is particularly true of the home environment where English is less likely to be as frequently spoken. Both languages side by side also aids children's English comprehension and therefore the book doubles as a language learning tool.

Audio:

As per the guidelines of this Challenge, we made sure to incorporate an audio aspect to the storybook, which you can see on the side of every page. The audio clip on each page reads out the dialogue to the reader, adding a teaching element to the picturebook. We wanted the books to be as educational as possible, so, as Molly mentioned previously, we took into consideration that Kenya has two mother tongue languages - English and Swahili. For this reason, you will see that each page has an audio button for the English translation audio, as well as space for a Swahili version. Due to complications caused by covid-19, we were unable to find someone to narrate the Swahili translation. However, we are confident that we would be able to find a volunteer if the books were to be produced and distributed in the future.

The kids or mentor will be able to use these buttons interchangeably to narrate the story if they wish, as it is not uncommon for both languages to be taught to kids in school or at home from a young age.

Illustrations:

In illustrating the book, we took inspiration from iconic children's book illustrators from our childhood such as Theodor Geisel, who wrote and illustrated many of the Dr Seuss books, and Sir Quentin Saxby Blake, who illustrated many of the Roald Dahl books. From Dr Seuss, we took inspiration from their use of a simple bright palette and a mix of highly decorative and more plain pages depending on the amount of dialogue on each page to create a more varied visual experience, which helps to break up the larger chunks of text in the book. From Roald Dahl, we took inspiration in simple but effective line drawings for character designs. We aimed to make each character from the humans to the animals as approachable and friendly as possible, giving children the chance to be able to replicate and draw the characters themselves. A simple Google search of African savanna climates inspired the colour palette; we included many vibrant oranges, reds and yellows, and softer shades of green, brown and gold to depict the savanna terrain.

In deciding the recurring pattern seen on introduction page, outro page, and in the characters clothing, we researched African wax print batik designs, also known as Ankara.⁸ It is a common technique to create beautiful and colour patterned fabric and is seen through much of west Africa. They can be part

⁸ 'A Brief History Of Ankara Fabric And African Prints' (*Oludan*, 2020) <<https://www.oludan.com/blogs/news/a-brief-history-of-ankara-fabric-and-african-prints>> accessed 24 April 2020.

of a non-verbal communication of messages among African women and each design is personal and protected. We attempted to emulate this beautiful and complex style in a simple, unique pattern which features the three key colours of our series. The pale blue for the elephant, the rich orange for the lion and the bright green for the painted dog.

We had planned to include a number of pop ups and interactive pages with flaps to reveal extra facts and changing scenes. We had intended to page 2 open with a double door style flap to reveal page three to show the transformation of the landscape. We also intended to include extra facts about the ivory industry in a flap behind the car. However, we sought to maximise the level of participation and interaction from our books through other means. We curated a teaching guide, food chain poster and anatomy of the elephant poster.

Names of Characters:

Across our three stories, we have three important and recurring secondary characters: the boy, the girl, and the law enforcement officer. These three characters, alongside the main character of the endangered animal, were all given names based off of common and meaningful Swahili names.

Starting with the recurring secondary characters, we named the girl Akina, which according to a website for expecting mothers, means “solidarity” and “family bond.” We thought this name was extremely apt for this character, as she, between herself and the boy, is the one who condemns poaching, stands in solidarity with the endangered species, and creates a bond between all the characters involved in the story, even the apprehensive boy. We named the boy Elewisa, meaning “an intelligent and mindful person.” Though his apprehension is shown by virtue of his father being a farmer and thus his naivety to the gravity of poaching, he displays open-mindedness across the series, being mindful to different opinions, and therefore ultimately advocating for the preservation of the endangered animals. Finally, we named the law enforcement officer Akida, which means “chief” or “officer” and one who is determined and diplomatic. The meaning of Akida is exactly what we attempted to portray the officer as - diplomatic in his reasoning to save endangered species, and determined in doing so.

The three animal characters were named based on either the qualities the animals characteristically display in real life, or the sentiment behind the storyline in itself. For instance, the African Bush Elephant character was named Azizi, meaning “treasure,” “value,” or “precious one.” Through this, we hoped to imply that African Bush Elephants should not be poached and should, instead, be regarded as treasurable and valuable to the earth. We named the African Lion character Amana, meaning “a warrior at heart who is faithful and loyal,” hoping to present the species as apex predators they are - strong creatures with no ill intention, just a survival instinct. Finally, we named the African Dog character Imara, meaning “strong one.” Upon research, we gathered that it is normally a female dog that leads the pack, so we wanted the name we chose for the character to epitomise this trait of commandment that the female dogs tend to have.

Glossary:

The glossary explains some of the more specialist terms within the book. We hoped that this would help children to advance their vocabulary, so again the book also serves as an all round learning tool.

Since the book is aimed at children it is highly likely that many will not have heard terms such as ‘trampled’, ‘endangered species’ or ‘tourists’. Children cannot appreciate the value of the lessons in the book if they do not understand the language used. However, we found that some of the terms were so vital and specialist that simpler synonyms did not exist, or else we lost some of the meaning. For this reason, we felt that including a glossary was the best possible solution to this problem.

The glossary uses short simple language to explain terms within the book and can be constantly referred to while reading. A section on how to use the glossary is included within the teaching guide, as well as suggestions for learning activities relating to the glossary words.

Teaching Guide:

The teaching guide is an important prerequisite material for anyone wanting to further educate children on the importance of condemning poaching and preserving endangered species, just like the three “Akina and Elewisa’s Wildlife Adventures” picturebooks attempt to do, but in a more sophisticated and thorough way. It will equip the mentor of the child with more diligently researched information in regards to the environmental and economical impacts of the trafficking and poaching of species in savanna-ridden climates in Africa, specifically in Kenya. This ensures that the mentor is fully primed with the relevant research and materials pertaining to the topic to facilitate not only a more productive post-reading conversations with the child/children, but also any activities, games or tests that they may want to carry out with the children after (perhaps with the supplementary food chain and food web posters we have curated as well). It will therefore help guarantee that kids have successfully engaged with the purpose and the message of the book. The principal behind the teaching guide is therefore for mentors to be able to prove the ultimate test of knowledge: to be able to comprehend complex problems and then untangle them in a way so simple that even children can understand them.

Additional Posters and Activities:

To accommodate the storybooks and the teaching guide, we have curated a food web poster and a labelling activity poster to enrich the child’s knowledge about the different endangered species, and how they interact and are important in relation to other animal species. The Elephant anatomy poster can be used by children to colour in, label, and possibly write down any relevant facts that the child has learned about that species, which can be extracted from the book or the “fun fact” bubbles on the poster. The use of such posters has been provided to further engage with the child’s visual learning, as the use of posters is efficient in developing a child’s understanding of complex issues. Therefore, for children to understand a multi-layered issue like poaching, we thought the food web and food chain posters would help to bring together the different storylines, by visually expressing how the African bush elephant, the African lion, and African wild dog interact in real life to each other and provides a constructive link between the different books. The labelling activity could be used to further teach the kids about, for example, elephants’ ivory tusks, and a similar activity could be designed for the lion and wild dog to highlight the importance of the role in the ecosystem.

Possible Manufacturer:

To satisfy the ‘interactive’ part of the brief, our book design includes pop-outs and movable parts revealing extra information. We also think that choosing to print in full colour would appeal more to our younger target audience. We have therefore sourced a manufacturer called ‘Hung Hing UK’. This manufacturer also has a UK-based creative team to help guide projects ‘with everything from designing novelty pop-ups, concept development and advice on production techniques.’

We also considered and checked that Hung Hing products are tested to child safety standards of the UK, which is important for potentially hazardous electronics. Hung Hing provides services for children’s pop-up and sound books, as well as in the children’s toy industry, and hence meet safety requirements.

All books from the company are produced in China but they provide services throughout Europe (including the UK). The creative team provides prototype services as well as designing print templates for the final manufacturer.

We have been in correspondence with them through email, and they have assured us that they would be able to design storybooks with the pop-out and audio features we hope to incorporate in the printed version of the books. One thing to note is that they normally take orders of 5,000 units, with anything less normally costing significantly more.

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