



Under the Reading Tree



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Western Union Business Solutions Helps Under the Reading Tree to Establish Roots and Reach New Heights

Small operations, especially in the non-profit field, are often under-resourced and over-worked. The last thing they need is to have to spend precious resources on time-consuming operational details, such as managing currency exchange.

Under the Reading Tree faced just this problem. The Canadian non-profit organization was established in 2003 to fund the establishment of grassroots community libraries in Africa.

Having spent time in Africa working or volunteering, several of the founding Under the Reading Tree directors saw the pressing need for books; books that are needed to educate students and help to lift their communities out of poverty. "Despite the movement in many African countries towards free education" UTRT explained, "students still struggle to afford the textbooks they need for that education."

Five years ago, a group of friends in Vancouver founded Under the Reading Tree to answer this need. Since then the organization has established three libraries in Uganda and one in Tanzania – supporting librarian training and salaries, the purchase of books and operating expenses. It's a small organization that is making a big difference.

Putting Down Roots

Under the Reading Tree raises funds in Canada that are then sent to Africa to purchase books and to acquire and train staff locally. The concept has worked well and is gathering momentum.

In its beginnings, however, Under the Learning Tree was hampered by the nagging details associated with this type of non-profit work. Specifically, its success was hindered by the process of sending money from North America to Africa.

"We were getting frustrated by transaction fees," UTRT explains. "In some cases we couldn't transfer the funds at all, let alone transfer them in Tanzanian or Ugandan Shillings. And, often, when the funds arrived in Africa, there was a difference between the amount we sent and the amount they received because the value of the dollar had shifted. As a small organization, every dollar is important so this became a serious problem."

Literacy in Africa ranges from as high as 80% to as low as 30%. The United Nations has expressed a need for literacy programs to promote broader social and economic development.*

Only \$1200 can support three libraries in Uganda for a month. Books provided by Under the Reading Tree are helping students get an education that was previously impossible.

*CIA World Factbook 2013.



Nurturing Growth

After discussing their problem with Western Union Business Solutions, UTRT agreed they needed a simpler system that would save both time and money. UTRT: "Right away it was evident that Western Union Business Solutions understood our goals."

Western Union Business Solutions recognized that Under the Reading Tree needed an efficient and stable wire transfer option and the ability to make multiple transactions. The organization was set up with a customized online system that catered to their specific needs; more importantly, the process offered stability in a fluctuating market and the ability to personally transfer funds in global markets anywhere, anytime.

"Now, we can transfer funds anytime and anywhere," UTRT says. "We do all our transfers from wherever we happen to be, and can transfer money 24 hours a day, 7 days a week."

Further, the system allows UTRT to convert Canadian funds into Tanzanian or Ugandan Shillings before they send the money, so they always know exactly how much is going to arrive in Africa. This helps considerably with budgeting.

Now that these frustrating operational problems are solved, UTRT can look forward to the future.

"Everywhere we want to go, Western Union operates," says UTRT. They understood our goals and motivations – that we want to bring literacy to Africa. Should we decide to expand, building in other African countries now seems like a real and attainable goal."

"Our attempts with other currency exchange methods were draining our savings account, but Western Union Business Solutions offered us competitive rates! They understand that for a small non-profit organization every dollar counts."

Find out how we can help you do more:

Western Union Business Solutions

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