

Save RIM: We Are One!

Ideas to Help Fundraise for the Robben Island Museum



Presented by:

Jamie Bynum, Sarah Craig, and Sydney Holmes

University of West Georgia

Museum Education and Interpretation Class Spring 2021

We Are One!
A Proposal for Fundraising Activities
Robben Island Museum
Cape Town, South Africa

Jamie Bynum, Sarah Craig, Sydney Holmes
University of West Georgia
Museum Education and Interpretation Class
Spring 2021

Charge from the Museum:

MUSEUMS/HERITAGE SITES AS SPACES OF/FOR BUSINESS

RIM as an educational site recognizes education at all levels as a critical tool for addressing virtually all global problems relevant for sustainable development. In its initial plans, the RIM planned to become sustainable. However, in 2020, Heritage institutions across the globe faced operational challenges due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Their operations were brought to a standstill, their budgets were cut, and their programmes and research activities curtailed as a result. RIM finds itself at the cusp of a rationalisation process which means that staff may soon face a reduction in salary and/or may be retrenched.

As a national museum, RIM has been facilitating educational programs since its inception in 1996, with our 1 millionth visitor stepping on the Island in December 1999. This is indicative of the popularity of the Museum. The RIM has subsequently ferried on average 30 000 visitors (local and international) per annum to and from the Island. This is no longer the case, and the Museum's revenue has taken a nosedive.

Given the above please help us "SAVE RI" by designing a fundraising strategy/ project/ or give suggestions that will help RI stay afloat.

Team Project Introduction:

Our team approached this project with the idea that the best way to secure funding would be to make strong connections within the local community as well as internationally. Within the United States, museums are encouraged to make personal connections with both individuals and the community when it comes to fundraising; this idea has been the foundation of our project proposals. We studied the Robben Island Museum's website to determine which topics and themes could be used to make connections with various communities, especially those internationally. By connecting with communities internationally, the museum has a larger platform to raise money for the island.

Proposed Fundraising Strategy: We are One!

Proposed fundraising theme:

Our proposed fundraising strategy, “We Are One!,” focuses on creating connections with a variety of communities both locally, nationally, and internationally. By creating connections, the museum will see increased interest and participation in the programs we have proposed, therefore creating more awareness of the museum itself and sparking more interest in the museum’s programs and overall mission. The four programs we have proposed will each bring in revenue for the museum, whether it be a fee to participate or a donation. These programs are designed to raise awareness of various factors that are prominent to the museum itself, such as the stories of past prisoners and ecological conservation.

Fundraising Mission:

To foster relationships around the world that lead to increased awareness of the museum overall and revenue to aid the museum financially.

Team 1’s Program Goals:

1. To increase revenue received by the Robben Island Museum through a variety of programs.
2. To create relationships with various communities and organizations that bring the museum to the forefront of consideration when discussing certain topics.
3. To expand the types of programming offered by the Robben Island Museum.
4. To increase the discussion and importance of certain topics, such as prisoner stories and racism faced by those previously on the island.

Idea 1: Save Timmy!

Idea Description:

This idea focuses on recreating the RIM conservation brand. As the RIM website states, “The Island provides shelter and a safe haven for about 132 species of birds including some endangered species. The variety of species includes sea birds, water birds, and terrestrial birds. The Chauker Partridge and Guinea Fowl were introduced to the island by humans. Many of the birds use the Island for breeding and roosting. Some birds from the mainland such as the Crowned Cormorant and Black Crowned Night Herons breed on the Island in large colonies. The flora and fauna of the Island were affected by farming practices of the past and also the introduction of extensive plantations of shrubs and exotic trees. The spectacular veld flowers typical of the West Coast also occur on the Island during spring. The boat trip to the island provides an opportunity to see a wide spectrum of seabirds and mammals including Cape Fur Seals, Southern Right Whales, Dusky, and Heaviside Dolphins. On the island, there are about 23 species of mammals such as Bontebok, Springbok, Steenbok, Fallow Deer, and Eland. Ostriches, Lizards, Geckos, Snakes and three species of Tortoises can also be found on the Island.”¹

We propose to use a penguin as the face of the conservation brand, as penguins are widely revered among children and adults alike. For the purposes of this proposal, we will name this penguin Timmy, though the name can be changed to better suit RIM’s needs. We would create this new brand by setting up webcams around the conservation area without disturbing the wildlife, as webcam live streaming is incredibly popular among conservation groups.

In the United States, the Clearwater Marine Aquarium has a live stream of their dolphin, who is named Winter.² People from all over the U.S. began to travel to Florida to see her or donate to her care. In Rome, Georgia, Berry College set up a live stream camera in their eagle pavilion so those interested could watch the baby eagles hatch. Zoos have a similar setup if they are expecting baby pandas or giraffes. By setting up a live stream camera, you can create a bond between Timmy and the rest of the world.

The other way to revamp the conservation brand is through an animal sponsorship program. Many people love to sponsor animals, especially if they feel they have a connection with the animals. Businesses will often promote a product that says “If you buy this item, you save the life of a turtle,” which influences consumers to purchase said item. We propose a similar model but without international shipping. We suggest an electronic newsletter that states something along the lines of “For a monthly contribution of \$X or a one-time donation of \$X, you can provide Timmy or one of his friends with food and shelter for the next year.” The campaign would include a picture and some facts about the animal as well as its age, gender, and maybe a quirky personality trait, such as, “Timmy enjoys stealing fish from his twin sister Tina.”

¹ “Natural Conservation,” Robben Island, accessed May 01, 2021, <https://www.robben-island.org.za/learn>

² “Live Webcams,” Clearwater Marine Aquarium, accessed May 01, 2021, <https://www.cmaquarium.org/webcams/>

Mission of RIM:

This idea fits within both the “We Are One!” project and the mission of RIM because this idea promotes unification and making connections. RIM prides itself on the resilience of the people: this proposed program goes beyond the people and extends to the animals RIM seeks to protect. Some of these species are continuing to beat the odds of survival through RIM’s conservation efforts. This particular project aims to promote the international unification of the people and the earth’s creatures.

Audience:

This would be an international project. We would hope to reach specific audiences in the United States to foster a relationship between South Africa and the United States. We would specifically target young adults who have a passion for conservation efforts, as they, along with women of all ages, are more likely to donate to conservation efforts.³

Marketing and Partnerships:

There are many international conservation organizations to reach out to, including the World Wildlife Fund, the Nature Conservancy, the Wildlife Conservation Society, Oceana, Conservation International (based in the United States), and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to name a few. Connecting with such a partner would help spread awareness and promote the conservation brand. Using social media and the RIM website, we would advertise the link to the live stream and sponsor an animal program. The use of both unique and well-known hashtags, such as #SaveTimmy; #recreationlifeofRIM; #sponsorananimal; #conservation; and #SaveRIM, would help unify the brand, create a sense of familiarity, and promote the topic or program trend.

Revenue:

The revenue would come through the “Sponsor an Animal” program, where a donor pays \$X a month or \$X at one time to sponsor an animal for the coming year. While there would not be any direct revenue from the live stream link, its main purpose would be to initiate a relationship with RIM and the world. Some people may donate spontaneously after seeing the creatures via the life stream.

³ Alison Lenton, “People Who Support Animal Causes: Who Gives More?”, Faunalytics, last modified July 17, 2019, <https://faunalytics.org/people-who-support-animal-causes-who-gives-more/#:~:text=Demographics%3A%20On%20average%2C%20younger%20people,of%20these%20non%2Dmonetary%20donations.>

Idea 2: We Are One! Festival

Idea Description:

The “We Are One! Festival” would be an all-day, weekend-long festival that would feature cultures from all across South Africa, especially the Khoi-Khoi. One of the possible activities for this festival would be a panel with prison guards and former inmates, which would allow both groups to tell their stories, as well as allow the audience to ask questions. This part of the event would be streamed on a video-chatting platform, such as Zoom, so that people around the world could participate. Another event at the festival would be a geology tour of the island focusing mainly on the quarries near the prison. This tour would focus on the different types of rocks found on the island as well as what it was like for the prisoner working in the quarries. This festival has the ability to both produce a sense of togetherness across the whole of South Africa and educate those around the globe of South African cultures and lifestyles.

Mission of RIM:

This festival relates to the overall vision of the museum, which they note as being "To preserve and promote Robben Island as an inspirational national treasure and World Heritage Site that symbolises the triumph of the human spirit over extreme adversity and injustice."⁴ By discussing the various groups of individuals that have previously resided here, both in general and as prisoners, stories of overcoming injustices come forth.

Audience:

This would be a national as well as international event. It would include people of all ages and nationalities to come together and experience the culture of South Africa. There would be a focus on those studying culture, such as historians and anthropologists, as well as those with an interest in the stories of those who experienced the island during its time as a prison.

Marketing and Partnerships:

The festival holds many different partnership opportunities with museums in the United States like the Eastern State Penitentiary Museum and The National Civil Rights Museum, as well as other non-museum locations with similar histories such as Alcatraz Island. This program could be marketed across social media using hashtags such as #weareone! and #SaveRIM.

Revenue:

The revenue from this event would come from ticket and merchandise sales. A potential merchandise item is a geology kit that would let the purchaser mine for different minerals found on the island as well as across South Africa. This kit would include a piece of plaster containing

⁴ “RIM Establishment”, Robben Island, accessed May 11, 2021, <https://www.robben-island.org.za/organisation>

different types of rocks and minerals that could possibly be found on the island, as well as tools to break apart the plaster piece and find the different stones.

Idea 3: Art Around the World

Idea Description:

This program will take place both virtually and in-person, when COVID-19 restrictions allow. We propose the use of the physical landscape of Robben Island as inspiration for art classes. The number of classes held overall would be determined both by the Robben Island Museum staff and analysis of how well previous classes went.

Drawing inspiration from the Island's ferries, lighthouse, scenic landscapes, and plant and animal residents, as well as contemporary issues such as Black Lives Matter and Apartheid, art classes would be based around specific topics. Before each class, a list of materials needed for that particular class would be sent out to those who have paid to take part in the class if it is virtual; if it is in-person, the materials would be provided.

This program would help to connect to audiences of all ages around the world and bring more awareness to the issues that connect Robben Island to other parts of the world, such as racism and animal conservation. During the art lessons, facts about the island related to the topic of the class would be given to those participating to teach them about the island's history.

One possible outcome of these programs would be to host an international art competition among various age groups to have their art featured on the museum's website, win a cash prize, or whatever the museum deems appropriate.

Mission of RIM:

This program connects to the mission of Robben Island Museum in several ways. The mission "to conserve and manage the cultural and natural heritage in order to retain the significance and the outstanding universal value of the site" would be brought forward within this program as it focuses on many aspects of the island since art is a good way to connect with specifically kids.⁵ By allowing participants to explore various aspects of the island through art, they become more connected with the site as a whole.

This program also allows the museum to execute another of its goals: "To promote an inclusive and holistic understanding of the Island's multi-layered history." In terms of behind-the-scenes, this program will fulfill another of the goals, which is "To develop responsible and sustainable tourism products and services that offer a unique visitor experience." No museums that we know of are hosting virtual or in-person art classes based around the content of their museum. Especially with virtual classes, this program is incredibly sustainable in that supplies only need to be purchased for the individual teaching the class.

⁵ "RIM Establishment, Robben Island, accessed May 02, 2021, <https://www.robben-island.org.za/organisation>

Audience:

This program is meant to target audiences of all ages, as the artwork will be basic enough for children to follow along yet detailed enough to keep adults interested as well. Certain topics, such as racial inequities and animal conservation, are likely to target more specific audiences.

Marketing and Partnerships:

Partnership opportunities include connecting with a local art school, such as South Africa's Michaelis School of Fine Art, to host classes for either school credit, extra credit, or resume/CV content. By doing so, the museum would also make connections within its community, further gaining support locally. Partnering with such a school would also allow a venue for hosting in-person art classes. Marketing for this program would be unique from other programs, as it would use the artwork created by those in the class to further promote the program. We propose having a place online where participants can upload a picture of their artwork for both future marketing and possible competitions, if the museum decides to do so.

Revenue:

There will be a charge to participate in this program. In order to access the links to the digital classes, participants would need to pay a fee. While a smaller fee could be charged for those attending a live class, a larger fee could be charged for access to the archived class videos due to possible time difference issues.

Idea 4: Escape from Robben Island

Idea Description:

We propose a virtual escape room using Google Forms using the story of David Stuurman as the story for the escape room. Stuurman's story includes the story of resilience, courage, and the escape from Robben Island prison. The story would need to be well researched in order to create puzzles to escape the virtual prison. The escape itself can be modeled after Stuurman's escape and how he did it. When a visitor successfully escapes, the end of the program will display an "I Escaped Robben Island" printable certificate. Visitors would be encouraged to post a picture on their social media tagging RIM and using hashtags such as #EscapeRoom; #EscapeFromRIM; and #IEscaped. This will allow others to find the program outside the website. This would be a program RIM could place on the "Education" page of their website.

Mission of RIM:

In keeping with our We Are One! program, Stuurman's story is a story of resilience. He was a political activist and chief of the Khoi people. His story will connect to modern day movements happening now, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. This program will create a sense of connection and unification both locally in South Africa and across the globe.

Audience:

This program would be available internationally. We would hope to reach specific audiences in the United States to foster a relationship between South Africa and the United States. We would specifically target teens and young adults who can connect to Stuurman's struggles. As it would be available digitally, access could be granted around the world.

Marketing and Partnerships:

There is not a particular partnership we recommend with this program as it is RIM specific and uses Google Forms, rather than a private program or company. Hashtags like #EscaperRoom #EscapeFromRIM #IEscaped will help create a social media presence and a sense of familiarity.

Revenue:

This program will charge to access the link to the virtual escape room. Once the escape room is completed, the link will no longer be viable to prevent link-sharing without payment.