

Job Description – ECD, Advocacy & Systems Change Manager

Position: ECD, Advocacy & Systems Change Manager

Reports to: Chief Executive Officer

Based: remote but with preference for Sub-Saharan Africa. Must spend at least 4 weeks at start of employment in the field to gain strong understanding of the programme, the context and the people we serve. Regular travel to Ghana and Uganda if not based in either country.

Hours: Full time

Compensation: Starting salary of between £42,000 - £53,000 per annum depending on experience

About us

Our mission is to get preschool children in rural Africa to thrive. At present over 250 million children worldwide fail to receive the education and care they need in their early years which means they are less likely to do well in school, find gainful employment, and are at greater risk of early marriage, early parenthood and even criminality. Current approaches to solving this crisis are not proving effective or scalable in low & middle income countries.

That's where Lively Minds comes in. We have developed an award-winning Early Childhood Development programme that has been proven through randomised control trial to improve cognitive and socio-emotional skills and reduce malnutrition for pre-schoolers in hard-to-reach communities, so they have a greater chance of succeeding in school and in life. The programme provides marginalised Mothers with a parenting course that empowers them to run educational Play Schemes for pre-schoolers and to provide better home-based care, using cheap local resources. In addition, we started a radio programme for parents during COVID and this has now become a permanent fixture. The programme is delivered through government partners, is cheap and highly scalable. It genuinely has the potential to play a transformative role in ending the global ECD crisis.

We are extremely proud that the Government of Ghana have now adopted the programme and we have a ground-breaking partnership with them to support them to institutionalise it, fund it and to scale it to 60 education districts, reaching over 4000 communities and 1million children. In addition, an award-winning international research team are conducting a further randomised control trial to help us understand its impacts at scale.

Up till now our focus has been to maximise our impact by delivering our programme at scale. But we are now turning our attention to how we can bring about impact indirectly, through advocacy, dissemination, and systems-change work.

We're a lively ambitious organisation, determined to have a major positive impact on the world. We work hard at a fast pace, in a challenging environment. We expect everyone to

give their best to achieve the best possible results. Our work is demanding but provides plenty of opportunity for innovation, responsibility, growth, collaboration, creativity and fun. We want all staff to be happy, fulfilled and to feel appreciated and valued in their work.

To find out more about our programme, please visit www.livelyminds.org.

About the role

There's an urgent global need to improve early childhood care and education for preschoolers in hard-to-reach rural communities. The dominant ECD approach for the pre-primary years is to invest in a professional workforce & formal pre-primary provision. However, whilst important, this approach does not offer a complete solution. It tends to prioritise “schooling” over learning, does not always cater for holistic child development and wellbeing and overlooks the home-setting, which is a where a child spends the majority of their time. This approach also requires significant infrastructure, personnel, training, is unaffordable and is slow to scale particularly to rural settings.

We believe that marginalised rural parents are the untapped solution. We can showcase how to tap the enormous potential of rural parents as ECD providers. 92% of parents in our programme have less than 2 years of primary education. They are not paid for their work on the programme, nor are they provided with materials or infrastructure. We prove that with light-touch support parents and communities are willing and able to bring about significant improvements in their children's development. And this approach has many other benefits for the parents and communities.

We are seeking to bring about a paradigm shift in the sector by influencing global ECD policy-makers, funders and practitioners, so that they adopt, fund and replicate more parent-focussed pre-primary solutions.

We are recruiting an ECD, Advocacy & System Change manager to lead this exciting work. We are looking for a postholder who already has a deep understanding of the ECD crisis in lower & middle income countries and is passionate about finding effective parent-led solutions. You will be expected to disseminate our learnings, approaches and advocacy positions widely and influence global ECD system, practices and policies, generating benefit for millions of children and parents.

You must come with strong grasp of the existing ECD academic research and assessment tools. You must be able to interpret new policies, results/data (generated by us and by others) and identify opportunities and lessons that we can apply in our programme and in our strategic communications. And you must be willing to learn, adapt and innovate.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

- We have already started developing our advocacy & systems change strategy. This is likely to involve a) raising awareness among key policy-makers and investors of our policy alternative b) generating best practice and encouraging uptake of our ideas/approaches and methodology. You will help refine this strategy and will be responsible for delivering it
- Disseminate our learnings, ideas, approaches and evidence by creating compelling decks, thought-pieces, presentations, blogs, submissions that showcase the programme and our learnings to the relevant audience & key stakeholders
- Strengthen our relationships with senior global ECD stakeholders and represent Lively Minds at conferences, round tables, events, working groups with senior global ECD stakeholders
- Keep abreast of and engage with developments and research in the global ECD space, identifying where we can contribute ideas and learnings, and sharing learnings that may improve our practices
- Support government engagement teams in Ghana and Uganda to develop advocacy positions and objectives when they attend meetings/working groups
- Work closely with our Monitoring & Evaluation team to communicate evidence that we are generating
- Work closely with our Fundraising Team to raise awareness of our brand, the need, our impact and approach
- Build a strong understanding of our operations and ways of working and showcase these externally

You may be assigned any other responsibility in agreement with your line manager, in contribution to Lively Minds work and in recognition of your experience and skills. It is therefore expected for staff to be flexible and willing to contribute to the work of the wider team.

To succeed in this role, you will be

- You are an entrepreneurial leader. You can work with minimal support and resources, and find creative opportunities to achieve goals and seek out new opportunities
- You are an excellent communicator. Able to create compelling, high quality written material for an academic and policy-maker audience and able to command the attention of senior stakeholders through effective verbal communication
- You are highly analytical. You have a good understanding of global ECD policy and research developments and are able to identify ways to further our advocacy and system change goals
- You are able to deliver high quality work at pace and recover quickly from set-backs
- You are willing to be hands-on and get on top of details. You will be co-line-managing a communications officer and graphic designer. But will need to be willing

to take on all aspects of the role – from strategy, detailed planning, developing product to booking your flights to conferences.

- Be growth-minded and comfortable working in a unique working environment. We have developed innovative approaches to our programme and to our internal systems. We work as a multi-disciplinary team and are non-hierarchical and highly participatory. You will need to be adaptive, agile and open to new ideas, processes and ways of working.

Experience and Skills

Essential Experience and Skills

- Masters degree in ECD or closely related field (eg. Economics, psychology)
- You have at least 5 years experience of working in ECD sector (ideally pre-primary) either in an academic, policy-making/investor or practitioner setting
- Proven experience of developing strategic communications that have brought about either a change in policy or practice, or have brought in funding
- Familiar with policy, funder and research in ECD and able to digest academic reports and results at speed

Desirable Experience and Skills

- PhD in ECD or related field
- Experience working in sub Saharan Africa
- Familiar with Ashoka system-change tools and methodology
- Ideally have experience working either for a policy team/think-tank/funder/bilateral or multilateral funder

You will be expected to perform against the Lively Minds Competencies.

How to apply

If this sounds like you, please send your CV and cover letter to jobs@livelyminds.org by **11:59pm BST on Tuesday 15th August 2023**.

We love a good cover letter and see this as your opportunity to show us your communications skills in action. So please limit your cover letter to 2-pages and please let us know why you'd be perfect for the role and how you meet the behaviours, skills and experience requirements.

Previous applicants need not apply.

Due to resource constraints, we apologise, but we will only respond to shortlisted candidates.



Lively Minds operates a strict Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, and we therefore check suitability of successful candidates through background checks consisting of references and police checks.

Lively Minds is fully committed to equity, diversity and inclusion. We want this to be reflected in the diversity of the people who work for us and we welcome applications from people from all backgrounds and identities.