



The Beginning

The beginning is important they say
The beginning of life surely the most important of all
First noise
First smell
First sight
First taste
First touch
Imagine! Remember! Feel!
Beautiful silence or hospital chaos
Jasmine or Jif
Mother or doctor
Breast or bottle
Loving hands or touch of steel
We mould the future of our world
Let the next generation come to us gently
For they need to have truly healing hands
For a world we have treated so roughly
Bless them our children.

By Vanessa

Project Pueblo de la Luz

*Funding proposal to create a visionary centre for
Ante and postnatal women, mothers and midwives
Where we can walk towards the dream of an
empowering birth for all.*



a) CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of Organisation: Da-a-Luz

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Contact: Vanessa Brooks, Co-ordinator, Lay Midwife

Website: www.da-a-luz.co.uk

b) THE ORGANISATION

Purpose of the organisation/group

1. Our mission:

Da-a-Luz informs and inspires both midwives and women to create an environment in which all women are empowered towards a gentle, natural birth.

2. Who are the Beneficiaries and Target Groups of your work?

Women World Wide:

On a grand scale I believe that the world for women will change radically once our attitudes to birth change. We will honour our bodies, insist on our rights and make a gentler world for the next generation.

Local Women:

Fifteen years ago Orgiva was a simple village in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Today it is the new age centre of Europe, the eclectic mix of the rural Spanish people, a large Spanish gypsy community (Gitanos), and the enormous expatriate contingent from all social-economic groups make it a frontier of new ideas.

Women here are looking for better births. From the local Spanish who have the knowledge that forty years ago all babies were born at home with pueblo madronas (lay midwives), the traveller families who have been persecuted in their own countries for their lifestyle choices to the women who choose to birth in radical ways eg. Lotus births or unassisted birth to the horror of the 'professionals'. They have all felt supported by Da-a-Luz to have the right to take control of their own bodies.

Lay midwives:

We will seek to support and encourage those midwives who are discouraged within the medical system and often leave their profession, they need a new direction. Da-a-Luz can lead them towards a satisfying 'with women' career.

"After 9 months, looking back Luis and me are very grateful that we were able to have a lotus birth which would not have been possible any where else in Europe. I would recommend having your baby this way to every mother." Asta

3. Please mention local, regional, national and global women's organizations and networks with whom you collaborate.

- Asociación de Mujeres which is a local sheltered housing group for abused women - practical birthing seminars and counseling.
- The Mother magazine – a quarterly that works for improvement of women's rights to a good birthing experience – published essays.
- Midwifery Today – International magazine that works to support, encourage and educate midwives and other birth practitioners – commissioned essay for publication.
- Centro Salud – local health centre.
- The Almunecar Mother and Baby Group – a group set up by women inspired by the work of Da-a-Luz
- Birthing International Forum – a web-based discussion group of midwives and birth attendants to improve maternity rights.

4. How does your work contribute to the advancement of women's rights in your community, country and region?

Within the local area, traditionally, newly pregnant women go to see their GP and are immediately referred to the regional hospital, effectively they are pushed into a brutal archaic, medical route. Women are not made aware of their birth rights. Da-a-Luz offers women balanced information and inspiring choices without financial pressures.

Through our website, we are inspiring women worldwide to search for their right to birth in the way they want to. We also contribute through speaking at worldwide conferences and our international magazine contributions.

As a lay midwife Vanessa has battled for recognition within a medically dominated profession that deals with a natural event. Da-a-Luz works towards rights for lay midwives to practice as they have done for hundreds of years with women for women.

5. Has your group/organization applied to MamaCash in the past?

No

The structure of your organization

6. Please give a brief history of your organization. (Include the date your organization was founded and the name(s) of your founder(s).

- 1998 Justine Bowker (mother of two and shiatsu therapist) and Vanessa Brooks (lay midwife) meet to found Da-a-Luz in Southern Spain.
- 1999 Hold Da-a-Luz space at Glastonbury Festival and Buddah field promoting maternity rights and workshops in gentle birth and birth crisis.
- 2000 Website built, first retreat held in Orgiva. Justine moves to UK to study Shiatsu in pregnancy and becomes UK contact. Vanessa establishes the weekly Da-a-Luz group at a friend's house and continues to deliver babies, publish articles and empirically learn her trade.
- 2003 Da-a-Luz relocates to the beautiful and inspiring environment of a The Yurt, which is a local centre for holistic practitioners.
- 2004 Vanessa buys small piece of land to create a base for Da-a-Luz.
- 2005 Da-a-Luz holds workshops for midwives and mothers at Rocket Festival, Andalusia. 13 midwives attend. Website completely re-built by Lisa. Da-a-Luz buys desktop computer, scanner and printer and has a proper office. Option to buy adjacent land becomes available.

7. Are you a women's organization? If not, how are women involved in your organization?

Yes we are primarily a women's organization.

8. Specifically explain the role women play in decision making in the organization.

Women's enthusiasm for birth is heightened during pregnancy and after a beautiful birthing experience, they want to share and inspire women. Vanessa provides a stable forum for the women who **are** Da-a-Luz and those seeking good births, essentially they make the decisions. Every woman creates her birth, her way. It is her right.

Activities

9. Please describe briefly your organization's past and present activities ad the positive changes/successes accomplished by these activities. If you are just starting, please explain what positive changes for women our organization hopes to make.

In the past years we have educated and inspired hundreds of women towards seeking and achieving a good birth experience. On a practical level, Vanessa has delivered 60 babies, not one of these women has suffered a traumatic birth or post-natal depression. They have been empowered and gone on to inspire friends and colleagues in other places to insist on the right to a good birth.

"Vanessa your love and compassion to every pregnant womb-man is so positive and fresh. You energized my natural birthing right even more and created a feeling of wholeness within me.

I was once again totally confident with my ability as a mother to give birth naturally and with you to guide me. Thank you. Nes.

We have run our clinic for 5 years. Vanessa counsels women on termination, mis-carriage and birth trauma for donations under the umbrella of Da-a-Luz and refers women to other therapists in the area, creating an excellent support system for a huge amount of women who have often been judged for their lifestyle choices. We are designing a pack that can be distributed at festivals and colleges promoting the right to gentle birth. Both Justine and Vanessa through Da-a-Luz have brought together a network of people in Europe who are all working together to change the face of birthing and midwifery. The pueblo de la Luz will be a meeting place for like minds.

To more easily reach our Spanish community, we are currently translating the Da-a-Luz website into Spanish.

Financial Information

10. If your organization has existed for more than two years, please provide a detailed organizational budget history (income and expenditures) for the last two years.

n/a

11. If your organization has existed for less than two years, please provide a planned budget of what your activities will cost for the next year.

<i>Max. budget To Allocate</i>	<i>Remaining To Allocate</i>	<i>Total Allocated</i>
€9,600	€9,518	€19,118

<i>budget 2006/7</i>
01/01/2006

	<i>Description</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date Budgeted</i>	<i>Modification Date</i>	<i>Current Amount allocated</i>	<i>Increase Budget by</i>	<i>% Increase Budget by</i>	<i>New Budget</i>
TRANSPORT	INSURANCE		01/01/06	01/01/07	€173	€75	43.35%	€248
	MAINTENANCE	PARTS	01/01/06	01/01/07	€125	€50	40.00%	€175
	FUELS		01/01/06	01/01/07	€2,720	€750	27.57%	€3,470
								€0
MIDWIFERY	DRUGS MATERIALS		01/01/06	01/01/07	€780	€240	30.77%	€1,020
	LAUNDRY		01/01/06	01/01/07	€96	€59	61.46%	€155
	MAGAZINES BOOKS		01/01/06	01/01/07	€800	€300	37.50%	€1,100
								€0
HOUSING	GAS		01/01/06	01/01/07	€130	€30	23.08%	€160
								€0
ADVERTISING	LISA WEB SITE		01/01/06	01/01/07	€1,000	€250	25.00%	€1,250
								€0
TELEPHONE	MOBILE		01/01/06	01/01/07	€1,000	€250	25.00%	€1,250
								€0
CREDIT CARD	PRINTER/OLD STOCK		01/01/06	01/01/07	€240	€50	20.83%	€290
								€0
WAGES	VANESSA		03/01/06	01/01/07	€9,000	€1,000	11.11%	€10,000

12. Please provide the names of organizations that have supported you and list the amounts each has given. If you present this in your local currency, please include the exchange rate of your local currency to euros.

We have been well supported by our local community, a local midwife has have donated rugs and books for Da-a-Luz. Local practitioner donated 3000 euros towards the cost of the Da-a-Luz vehicle. But we have extremely limited access to larger funding sources as our work is ground breaking we are supporting women to re-claim their bodies from the patriarchal medical system. Lay midwives are still labeled as the witches.

c. THE PROJECT

Project information

13. Are you applying for a general support or for a specific project? (If you apply for a project grant, please continue with question.

Please see covering letter.

Specific project

14. If you are applying for a general grant (including overhead, technical instruments, and other costs please go directly to question 21).

15. What is the title of the project?

Pueblo de la Luz

16. Describe the situation you want to change for women in your country, region or community

We will provide a much needed central space that women can look to for balanced information not only in pregnancy and birth but all women's health issues. All too often expatriate and traveller women neglect their bodies due to lack of English speaking sympathetic health professionals. Out of 50 women I asked, only 15 have had a cervical smear in the last 5 years. We will advise and refer on termination, conception and menopause.

To provide an inspirational space, particularly for pregnant Spanish women. This will be revolutionary. The local health centre is so depressing and gives no information other than the highly medicalised birth route. I believe the centre will make a huge difference to the number of women suffering post-natal depression (PND) in the area. Statistics show that PND is directly linked to birth experience.

Until recently there has been no provision in Spain for people to home school their children. Da-a-Luz will provide a space to support those parents who do not wish to send their children to the local religiously based schools or cannot afford the Steiner School.

Our large traveling community should be entitled to the birth they want. These families have often fought for their beliefs: to live a nomadic lifestyle, to home schools their kids and live in alternative dwellings. Many of these people, despite being one of the lowest social economic groups will struggle to find the money for an independent midwife. Da-a-Luz would provide the space where the skills and talents of this colourful and radical group of people could be exchanged for their right to gentle birth.

17. Describe the change you want to achieve through this project?

As above

18. Describe the strategies (activities) you plan to use to make this change happen?

The option to buy a beautiful 2500 sq m piece of land next to the present Da-a-Luz base in the foothills of the Alpujarra is an opportunity not to be missed. Here we can create the paradise we have dreamed of for years. A permanent space to inspire women and midwives. The land is abundant with fruit and nut trees (oranges, lemons, limes, figs, pomegranates, almonds and olives are all well-established). With fertile soil and all year round sunshine and gushing water from a 100 year old irrigation (acequia) system, we will be able to plant the land to produce much more organic food – perfect for mums.



We are planning to build Pueblo de la Luz consisting of 3 yurt structures. The yurts are made locally, the first will be a quiet space to hold our yoga, relaxation and counseling sessions and space for local practitioners to treat women on a donation system and will hold our library. A wonderful resource for all local women.

The second yurt will provide accommodation for up to 8 people, a comfortable warm space which can be used during our midwifery workshops for couples and those offering work exchanges for Da-a-Luz services and those who wish to enjoy the inspiring energy of Da-a-Luz.

The third yurt will provide a children's space and crèche for mums and midwives during workshop session (much more relaxing to do yoga without your 3 year old). This will also serve as a resource centre for information on home schooling and a space to hold workshops for the children themselves.

These spaces will enable us to expand and to continue our group sessions. After 5 years of experimentation we have now learned the ideal to be a one hour yoga/meditation/visualization session (with no kids) for both pregnant and new mums followed by a discussion circle, then eating. We will hold a weekly home schooling support group, a grandmother's wise women circle will meet fortnightly and we will hold a regular open space for teenagers with advice on contraception and safe sex. (We hope to source a contact for free condoms.) Throughout the year we will offer weekend retreats for couples to discover their ideal birthing journey.

The concept of Da-aLuz has grown from the real need for many women to feel supported in the knowledge fo their own bodies to give birth beautifully. For families to feel truly involved in the birthing journey and for midwives to again discover the routes of an old honoured profession. With a beautiful home da-a-Luz will flourish and grow. Our message is important to the women of the world.

The permanent space (Pueblo de la Luz) will also enable Da-a-Luz to become self-funding through the group sessions.

"A huge thanks to you Vanessa for your guidance, encouragement and calming energy during the birth of Zico. The whole experience was everything I had hoped for and more. It will always be a very special memory for us and it wouldn't have been the same without you there. Much love and respect to you." Isobel, Phil and Zico

19. Describe the people or groups (beneficiaries) who will benefit from this project?

All the people mentioned in questions 16 and B2 above, will benefit from Pueblo de la Luz.

Women couples people/clients whatever in low socio-economic groups who are unable to have the birth they wish because it is financially unviable, and they often express their wish to forward the cause, give something back etc. at the moment this is not possible but Pueblo de la Luz would provide this.

20. Describe how many women (and men) you plan to reach with this project?

In the short term, with the new Pueblo de la Luz groups: Pregnancy, New mums, menopausal women and home schooling will reach 80 new people.

Next summer we will once again go on tour attending 3 festivals, these have been key to many women who have not been aware of home birthing options/schooling.

On a local level we can hope to see, when we are fully up and running, many women and their families using the facilities constantly. The number of births facilitated by Da-a-Luz, as we attract more midwives to the area to practice home birth, will rise.

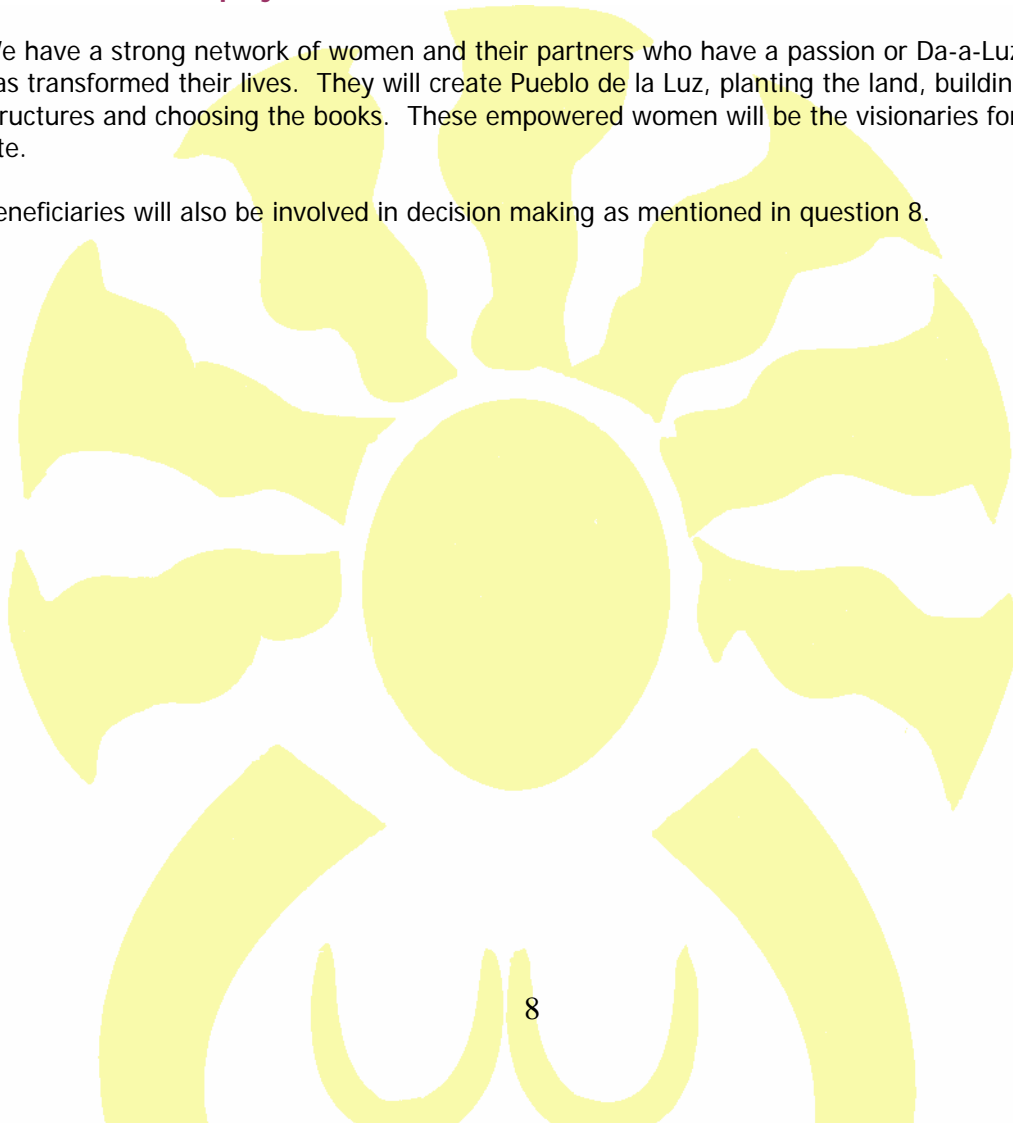
On a more far reaching level, as our profile rises several publications have expressed an interest in Da-a-Luz. These publications do not encompass solely birth and pregnancy, rather they are dealing with holistic issues eg. permaculture, family health etc. Our message of encouragement towards better rights to gentle birth and holistic care of the family will reach many ears across the board in both English and Spanish.

In the longer term, Pueblo de la Luz will become the focus of our Marketing strategy. This inspirational space can appear not only in alternative press but can infiltrate the mainstream reaching, combined with the growing website, unlimited consumers of reproductive age.

21. How are the beneficiaries involved in the design, implementation and/or evaluation of this project?

We have a strong network of women and their partners who have a passion or Da-a-Luz, it has transformed their lives. They will create Pueblo de la Luz, planting the land, building the structures and choosing the books. These empowered women will be the visionaries for the site.

Beneficiaries will also be involved in decision making as mentioned in question 8.



22. What are the costs and/or activities you hope to cover with a general support grant?

<i>Dept./Branch:</i>	
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<i>Max. budget To Allocate</i>	<i>Remaining To Allocate</i>	<i>Total Allocated</i>
€20,000	-€1,750	€21,750

<i>budget 2006/7</i>
01/03/2006

	<i>Description</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date Budgeted</i>	<i>Modification Date</i>	<i>Current Amount allocated</i>	<i>€ Inc Budg by</i>	<i>% Increase Budget by</i>	<i>New Budget</i>
GRANT MONIES	LAND	ASSET	03/01/06	12/31/06	€6,000		0.00%	€6,000
	YURT	ASSETS	03/01/06	12/31/06	€12,000		0.00%	€12,000
	FLOORS/WALLS	ASSETS	03/01/06	12/31/06	€800		0.00%	€800
	BURNERS	ASSETS	03/01/06	12/31/06	€600		0.00%	€600
	SOLAR PANELS	ASSETS	03/01/06	12/31/06	€750		0.00%	€750
	BATTERIES		03/01/06	12/31/06	€500		0.00%	€500
	BOOKS/FIXTURES	ASSETS	03/01/06	12/31/06	€500		0.00%	€500
								€0
	LEGAL FEES		03/01/06	03/01/06	€600		0.00%	€600

Evaluation

23. Describe the monitoring activities during the implementation of the project?

As a long term project with our ever-flowing stream of women and families passing through the caring arms of Da-a-Luz, we hope that Pueblo de la Luz will transform a growing dream into a beautiful reality. We will monitor the smiles and good health in both body and mind of everyone that uses Da-a-Luz and provide confidential anonymous feedback forms welcoming both criticism and praise (feedback form enclosed). Our email is always jammed with enquiries following Vanessa's published essays. The incredible technology of the website/internet enables us to check just who and how many hits we have per week. This information will be monitored by our fabulous PA, Lisa.

24. How do you plan to evaluate, or measure, the outcomes of your project?

Once again as above our project is on-going. We will watch as the numbers of women enjoying satisfying birth experiences grow and the number of midwives that come to enjoy the inspirational space of Da-a-Luz expand. We will continue to support women in their bodily rights at every stage from adolescence through to menopause.

Budget of the project

25. What is the total amount of money you are seeking? (Please provide a budget in Euros, or in your local currency with the conversion rate from your local currency to euros. Mama Cash will not be able to process your application if you do not provide an accurate conversion rate from your local currency to euros).

20,000 (twenty thousand) euros

26. Did you approach other funds/organizations for grants concerning this same project/ costs? (if yes, please list the other funding sources and the amount you requested)

This is our first funding application.

27. What will it happen if you receive only partial support for this project?

The project is ever growing, the land, yurts, basic heating, lighting and bathroom facilities are a priority. However, the creature comforts, a well-stocked library and beautiful gardens are all food for the soul. Happy minds make happy health bodies. So will we continue to fund raise and seek other grants (any suggestions welcome) throughout the year. We hope MamaCash can offer us the stepping-stone on which to continue our important work.

References

28. Please, send us three reference persons (from outside the organization) and include their occupation and contact information (postal address, phone- and fax number and e-mail address)

Name: Tricia Anderson MSc BAHons PGDip(THE) RM SOM
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Occupation: Chartered Physiotherapist, Creative Kinesiologist,
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*My sense is that this very beautiful venture that Vanessa is wanting to initiate will augment the amazing opportunities that are available for women to become creators of their own birth giving. This extraordinary chance to empower is much too precious to be missed.
Romany.*