In focus: Supporting Mzuzu University after disaster struck

Our Theory of Change

Top 10 tips for resource mobilisation

October 16 / Issue 23
Welcome to issue 23 of BookLinks – the Book Aid International newsletter for our library partners.

In this issue you can find a report on how we are working with our partners in Malawi to help Mzuzu University’s library restock after a fire and a report on the new Children’s Corners we’ve recently created with our partner Zambia Library Service. We meet passionate young librarian Sarah Ogembo from Kenya and take a look at our Theory of Change, developed earlier this year.

Resource mobilisation is key to ensuring your library has all it needs and to overcome challenges. Find some tips on mobilising resources for your library on page 10.

We really hope you enjoy this new issue of BookLinks. We welcome your feedback on the content - please email judith.henderson@bookaid.org with your comments.

Inside this issue

In focus: Supporting Mzuzu University after disaster struck 3
Profile: Miss Sarah Ogembo, Head of Library 4
Aunty - I want to read! Children’s Corners in Zambia 6
Our Theory of Change 8
Top ten tips for resource mobilisation 10
News 12
Supporting Mzuzu University Library after disaster struck

A devastating fire damaged the entire stock of the library.

Just before Christmas 2015 we received some terrible news: during the night of 18th December, the library at Mzuzu University in Malawi was badly damaged by fire. Thankfully no-one was hurt, but the entire stock of textbooks was reduced to ash, along with much of the building. The annexe housing the children’s library survived, but students were faced with nowhere to study and no books to support their studies.

Book Aid International has supported Mzuzu University with donations of textbooks for over 20 years. In fact, many of the lost core texts were titles we had supplied, thanks to publisher donors such as SAGE, Elsevier and Pearson. We were anxious to assist the university in their hour of need, as we had helped the flooded Bindura University of Science Education library in Zimbabwe earlier that year.

In January, we were contacted by our long-standing partners at the Malawi National Library Service (MNLS), who distribute many of Book Aid International’s books in Malawi. They sent us a list of over 600 textbooks that the Mzuzu University librarian, Mr Felix Majawa, had identified as the most urgently needed. The university was using an assembly hall as a temporary library, but that they had no textbooks. Could Book Aid International help?

As an initial response, Stevie Russell, our Collections Development Manager managed to find 827 books from our warehouse stock that matched titles on the Mzuzu list. These were sent on our January shipment to Malawi, while we set about trying to source more. In February a very special consignment of brand new medical textbooks was delivered to our London warehouse from Elsevier in the USA. This contained over 6,000 medical and science books including subjects taught at Mzuzu such as nursing and IT.

Book Aid International’s long-standing supporters at Wiley also responded to Mzuzu’s appeal for help, by donating copies of all the Wiley textbooks on their priority list. Despite this, many of the books on the Mzuzu list still remained to be found. We were contacted by our long-standing funder, the Beit Trust, who had also had an appeal for help from Mzuzu University. The Beit Trust provides funds to us each year to supply books to southern Africa, a proportion of which is for the specific purpose of purchasing books which are needed, but rarely donated. As one third of this funding is intended to buy further and higher education books for libraries in Malawi, we agreed with the Beit Trust that this year, their money could be used to purchase the highest priority textbooks lost in the Mzuzu fire that we could not supply through book donations. Thanks to generous trade discounts offered by many publishers and wholesalers, this money has enabled us to replace at least 80 more volumes of Mzuzu University’s lost book stock.

In June we sent our second shipment of the year to Malawi containing 4,399 new books for the university library at Mzuzu. These books included those donated by Elsevier, Beit Trust, SAGE and Wiley as well as many other generous supporters of Book Aid International’s work. We continue to source books to assist the university library in its restocking.

“On behalf of Mzuzu University I would like to express our sincere gratitude for your kind gesture in support of the library."

Felix Majawa, Librarian, Mzuzu University Library
I met Sarah during the Inspiring Readers librarian training in Kenya. The training introduced the librarians to the Inspiring Readers programme and showed them how to train teachers in running a successful school library. Sarah was the youngest in the group, but one of the most confident and active members. I was lucky enough to also witness her put what she had learned into practice, training teachers and head-teachers from five local primary schools in her town, Kisii. I was impressed by her skill and the ease with which she facilitated the learning of many professionals, some twice or three times her age, without ever having led training before. I took some time to find out more about this inspiring young woman and how she got to where she is today.

Who is Sarah Ogembo?
I am a 27 year old lady that loves her job! The main things that typify me are that I am very passionate about children. I cannot stand injustice and I always try to be a very happy person. Professionally speaking, I would classify myself as an information provider. I chose this career path because I think that each and every person should have access to information to make positive changes to society – and these changes are cultural, social, economic and political. I believe that the role of libraries is to change the world one person at a time through access to information through books.

How did you get to where you are today?
When I was growing up, my mother worked at the Ministry of Land. The community library was opposite my mother’s ministry. We went there when my mum went to work and we stayed all day during the holidays until she came to collect us. I loved reading the books – I would read the whole shelf from left to right. When I was a teenager I loved the romantic novels and I was lucky that my secondary school had a very good library with a lovely young librarian who was very good at her job. When I got to university I really knew what I wanted to do. I studied library and information science and I picked this course because it was relevant to my strengths and passions. I attended the University of Kenyatta and I was there for four years. They had a very good library which I used all the time. Once I graduated and started looking for a job, I applied to work at knls and once I was successful, I was sent to Kisii straight away.
What do you enjoy most about your role?
The daily interaction with lots of different people, especially the children. Seeing the ones that come in to the library to do an assignment but can’t afford to buy the course book, they come in and use it in the library. This is one of my favourite things about this job.

Tell us about your work with Book Aid International.
Since working at Kisii, I was invited into the partnerships that knls have with other organisations. I know that as an organisation we cannot do everything, so it is useful to work with other stakeholders. With Book Aid International in particular, I have worked on the Inspiring Readers programme as Kisii library is one of the hub libraries in the first ever tranche of the programme. The local schools involved have now become institutional members and the children are really enjoying their new books. The relationship between our library and the teachers and head-teachers from the local schools have been strengthened and I think the schools will really benefit from the programme. My role within this programme is to act as a link between the schools and Kisii library. We are now monitoring what is happening and we are guiding and training the teachers to ensure that the children get the most out of their new resources.

How do you see the role that libraries can play in the development of Kenyan society?
There has been a big change in libraries from when I was a kid to now in terms of the advancement of technology. The primary role of the library might not change – every person should have access to resources to make sure their literacy levels are increased. But the resources and how we access them will change in the future. Libraries have a big role to play in helping people adapt to future societies, but with the same age old common goal.
In Zambia, as in many African and West Indian countries, the term Aunty is used by young children to show respect to an adult woman. It can be interpreted as a term of endearment, like ‘mama’ – with no familial relationship required. So the little girl who skipped into the Kasama Provincial Library, calling at the top of her voice, “Aunty, I want to read!” was a clear example of a child who has found a love for the library and of reading. I discovered that such stories of children happy with their new Children’s Corners were plentiful during my trip to Zambia in August.

I undertook monitoring visits to three provincial libraries in Choma, Chipata and Kasama where Open Doors Children’s Corners have recently opened. The three key areas of transformation that we are looking for with this project are –

1. **Transformation of the collection** – from old and dusty books to bright, high-quality books for children on a range of topics
2. **Transformation of the space** – from what is often an unstimulating and uninviting space to one that is colourful, and inviting for children – a place where children can find furniture to suit them and books that are at their level
3. **Transformation of the librarian** – increased skill of the librarian to understand the reading needs of children, to be able to handle large numbers of children and support their learning through the running of reading promotion activities.

In all three libraries I visited I could clearly see the transformation of the space. Creativity was at work – from the forest backdrop in Choma to the sound proof doors in Kasama. Lots of thought had gone into making the spaces very attractive as well as practical.

But I wanted to hear from the various stakeholders what they thought of the library and what impact it was having on them.

In each province I started at the top with the Provincial Education Officers (PEOs). PEOs are busy civil servants with huge responsibilities to provide quality education to children in their province. In Chipata, Dr Allan Lingambe praised the librarian for her hard work in leading the transformation of the children’s section. He described the role of the Children’s Corner as an ‘instrumental’ strategy for improving learner performance. This goal of improving learner performance is a huge challenge as there are funding and resource shortages as well as a shortage of teachers. The Children’s Corner is therefore seen as an additional way in which children can practise their reading.

In Choma too, the PEO, Mrs Chikalekale, also praised the Children’s Corners:

> Overall, there is increased interest in the library. There is a lot of commitment by policy makers to support the libraries. The Open Doors programme is coming to support Government efforts... Now that the place has been painted, children are attracted. Parents have such confidence in the librarians and the library to keep children occupied that they drop their children off in the morning, bring them lunch and pick them up at the end of the day! Not all children are able to read – but they are very engaged with the books – and that is a crucial beginning.

My time with the librarians in Zambia was illuminating. They were truly appreciative of their training from the Open Doors programme and were very frank in sharing how this has changed their practices. They also noted that their change in behaviour led to a reciprocal change in the behaviour of the children.
Case study: Joshua’s story

Joshua’s parents have never been to a library but they encourage him to come, even though they live some way away. His school has very few books and he has some at home, though he has read them all. When asked about the particular books he likes, he named Beast Quest and emphasises that reading has taught him different things like how to talk to people, how other people live in different parts of the world and how new words have improved his vocabulary.

When I asked him what three things he likes about the library, he answers – almost as if he has seen the project concept note (!) – “the books, the environment and the librarians.”

The books are so interesting and the place looks nice. The environment is good and very inviting. The painting is nice and the colours are lovely.

These three elements are key to the success of the Children’s Corners, wherever we have the opportunity to implement them. These libraries and communities will lead the way in reviving the culture of reading across the countries where they have been established and that’s a great achievement for everyone.

What librarians are saying

“We have seen children improve in their reading from struggling with ‘babies’ books to requesting harder books.”

Mary Munyata, Librarian, Chipata

“After the rehabilitation of the space and the children began to come, it popularised the library... now the library has become known... the children have told their parents ‘I want to go to the library!’ Before the training I had no idea of how to handle children... after the training I am able to confidently approach and handle a situation.”

Alan Hangwelele, Provincial Librarian, Kasama
Developing Book Aid International’s Theory of Change

Thanks to funding from players of People’s Postcode Lottery to help supported charities improve their impact assessment, we were able to take the first steps on our Theory of Change journey.

It was a whole team affair, including Board members and all staff. We were led by an experienced consultant who challenged us to think about the need for our work before thinking critically about our vision for the lives of our beneficiaries – the children and adults using public and community library services, the higher education learners and professionals, medical staff, prisoners and refugees who access our books.

A Theory of Change is both a process and a document which helps organisations to really go back to basics and think about the change they work towards. Once the change has been articulated, the organisation then considers how it contributes to the change and what other factors affect it. Our consultant used a helpful example to explain this: parents want to bring up their child to be happy, healthy and successful. But there are other factors influencing the child that parents cannot always control e.g. schooling, friends, media etc. So their Theory of Change would involve working out the things they can do to ensure their child grows up to be happy, healthy and successful, whilst understanding that other people and factors also have a part to play.

Engaging in the process of drafting the Theory of Change enables staff to reflect on the reason we exist in the first place. This is always useful for organisations which have been operating for a long time, as we have. This focus on the need for our work helped us all to move away from thinking about the operational side of what we do and to really concentrate on the reasons why we do it.

We were then encouraged to consider our daily activities and how each of our roles contributes to our vision – whether it’s developing training materials to build local capacity, preparing a pallet of books for shipment to Africa or writing a funding proposal. We reminded ourselves of the crucial role of our in-country library partners and how important it is that we share a vision for the future of reading in Africa. We contribute towards this vision both together and separately from our partners but the end result we work towards is the same.
Mapping how our roles contribute to impact

We now have a document which outlines, both in narrative form and a diagram, how we can contribute to change. This document takes the reader through the process of change – from the actions that we take through to the things these actions allow our partners to do and finally to the change that this makes for users of the libraries we support. By mapping out this process we can illustrate and evaluate how our model works. More importantly, we can use this process of mapping change to assess whether new projects or streams of work will really have the impact we seek. We can also map out who else is working towards the same vision and that helps us to establish and maintain good partnerships which will ultimately bring the joy of reading to more people in Africa.

Our Theory of Change diagram

In the programmes team, we can now visualise our beneficiaries more clearly and that is helping us to co-design projects with partners which are focused on the people and communities we want to support. For other teams the process was an opportunity to bond and understand better what other departments do. Going through this process also highlighted how we might improve our own monitoring and evaluation of the way the books we send are used. As a result we have now scoped out an improved system to monitor our book provision in the countries we support.

We can say with confidence that as an organisation it has made us more focused and more aware of what we are doing and why. Most importantly, we are thinking about the people we work to support in a new and exciting way. Developing our Theory of Change has been a thoroughly worthwhile exercise for us and the learning from it will assist us as we look forward and develop our new strategy for the next three years.
10 tips for mobilising resources for your library

Resource mobilisation is a process of finding out which resources your library is lacking, who has these resources and how you could go about acquiring them. It is more than just fundraising as you can mobilise a number of different resources that are non-financial. Use these ten steps to plan and mobilise resources from various providers in your community!

1. **List the challenges your library faces**
   Get together with the other staff members at your library and discuss the challenges that your library experiences. This is a great way to work out which resources you do not currently have.

2. **Discuss which resources you are lacking**
   Once you have determined which resources you need, make a list with the most important resources at the top, descending in importance from top to bottom. Remember to select resources that could help you resolve the issues you have identified.

3. **Research providers that could help**
   Look at your list and discuss the organisations that either sell or manage these resources. Consider which organisations you already have contacts with and which organisations could be approached.

4. **Consider approaches**
   Different organisations can be approached in different ways, depending on the resource that you are trying to acquire. Make sure your approach is appropriate to the organisation that you are applying to. Examples of different approaches are: written proposals, online forms, letters, phone calls, conversations with acquaintances or emails.

5. **Plan approaches**
   Once you have created a list of resources, the providers that could provide them and the types of approaches, it is time to plan each approach in detail. How are you going to ask for the resource? What will you be using it for? How will it make a difference to your library? How can you demonstrate that your new resource is having a positive impact on your library? Make sure to include these points in your application.
6. **Approach**

Next, make your planned approaches. Remember that some will be more formal and require more detail than others. Be patient and wait for the responses to arrive. Some of the processes may contain several stages. Make sure to always follow up.

7. **Thank resource providers**

Once you have received the resources that you have applied for, make sure to send formal thank you notes to the providers that donated them. These thank you notes should be in writing, whether by email or letter. Even if you are not successful, send a thank you note to acknowledge their response. This helps to build relationships for the future.

8. **Measure the impact of your new resource**

A great way to show that your resources are appreciated is to measure the impact of the resource on your library. How is the new resource helping your users? Ask them some questions about how their library experience has changed thanks to your new resources. Take some photos and write a short paragraph with some quotes.

9. **Share the impact of your new resource**

Let the provider of your new resource know how much positive change they have facilitated thanks to their donation. Share your photographs and quotes with them via email or in a letter.

10. **Use impact to mobilise new resources**

Once you have a bank of quotes and pictures outlining how your new resources have transformed your library for the better, you can use them in future applications. Providers will be more likely to give you resources if they can see the positive changes they can contribute to.
CILIP Conference 2016

Book Aid International staff members Judith Henderson and Stevie Russell attended the CILIP Conference 2016 in July. The conference sessions were focused on:

- managing information
- everyday innovation
- using technology
- professional development.

Although the conference is focused on libraries in the UK, there were many sessions and lessons that can be shared more widely.

One of the key speakers was Scott Bonner, Director of Ferguson Public Library in the USA. He spoke passionately about how the library became a safe community space at a time of immense local turmoil in the town. Ferguson hit the international headlines in 2015 following the killing of a young black man by local police. There was significant unrest in the town and local schools were closed for a number of weeks. Teachers and community members used the library space to run classes and people came to view the library as a safe and impartial place.

Elsewhere at the conference, interesting lessons were shared from a nationwide programme to install wifi in every public library. This included what libraries can do to make their wifi offering more engaging and with more added value than the local coffee shop or shopping mall. Library teams demonstrated great creativity with programmes using wifi to support local schools, the elderly and visually impaired.

The Reading Agency announced the launch of a new toolkit in September designed to measure the impact of reading for pleasure, an initiative Book Aid International will be following closely.

All presentations from the conference can be found at:

http://cilipconference.org.uk/past-events/cilip-conference-2016/presentations/

Recent publications

Two notable reports that have vital information for librarians, library planners and educationalists are:

**Feasibility Study for a Global Book Fund**
produced by Results for Development, a US-based international NGO. The report looks at the importance of reading books in education, especially those written in local languages and ways to improve the financing, production, distribution and usage of books in schools and other educational settings:

www.r4d.org/focus-areas/feasibility-study-global-book-fund

In September 2016, UNESCO launched the **2016 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report**. The GEM Report, which will be issued each year for the next 15 years, will be used to assess the progress of education in light of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set in 2015. The SDGs, which build on the earlier Millennium Development Goals, seek to chart a course to a more equal and sustainable future worldwide, aiming to achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2030.

The report strengthens the case for the work that Book Aid International and our partners do, as outlined in SDG4 – “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

See the full report:

en.unesco.org/gem-report/