Where Books Change Lives

Our vision for 2020
A message from our Chief Executive

At Book Aid International our vision is a world where everyone, whatever their circumstances, has access to books that will enrich, improve and change their lives.

Today, as we look to the future, we face a world that is rapidly changing, offering new opportunities and technological developments but also presenting fundamental challenges to communities around the world as they seek to educate the next generation and build for the future.

In the midst of all this uncertainty we believe that the book has a central role to play, not only in improving individual life chances but also in contributing to global development.

The Sustainable Development Goals, launched in January 2016, point the way to a more equitable and sustainable future for all. They identify education and lifelong learning as key to achieving poverty reduction, hunger eradication, improved health, gender equality and empowerment, sustainable agriculture, resilient cities and more equal, inclusive and just societies.

The 2016 Global Education Monitoring report identifies the ability to read as a major driver for sustainable development and a key enabler for all to be able to contribute to societal, economic and personal change. It also emphasises that access to books is a key factor in helping children learn to read, succeed in education and reach their potential.

These findings strengthen the case for the work of Book Aid International and inform our vision moving forward.

In delivering our Vision 2020: Where Books Change Lives strategy we will prioritise and support those who live in situations or in communities where access to books is at its most challenging.

The strategy will also support the positive and transformational work being done by community and volunteer groups and by local, national or international NGOs striving to improve opportunities for everyone to access books and read.

We look forward to working with all those who believe, as we do, that books change lives.

Alison Tweed
Chief Executive
Book Aid International
About us

Book Aid International is the UK’s leading international book donation and library development charity.

Every year we send around one million brand-new print and e-books to public, school and university libraries as well as to libraries in prisons, hospitals and refugee camps. We donate books to communities where people would otherwise have very little opportunity to read.

We believe that books have the power to change lives. This belief underpins our vision, mission and the values which guide everything we do.

Our vision, mission and values

Our vision is a world where everyone has access to books that will enrich, improve and change their lives.

Our mission is to provide books, resources and training to support an environment in which reading for pleasure, study and lifelong learning can flourish.

Our values inform and guide our work. We are committed to:

Equality of opportunity. Everyone should have the opportunity to read, whatever their circumstances. We support people from all walks of life in their efforts to access the books they need to achieve their goals.

Quality. No-one should have to make do with old, out-of-date books which do not meet their needs. The quality of the books we send is the hallmark of our work.

Investment in the future. Capacity building creates long-term-impact. We help increase the ability of local libraries to support their communities by training librarians and teacher librarians in working with children and other key skills.

Collaboration. Working in partnership ensures that our work is effective, responsive and meets communities’ real needs. We work closely with national library services, NGOs, community library networks, local government and individual institutions.

What readers say about us

“The children in my community who have Book Aid International books in their school say that books make them feel like they have gone out into the world.

Some of the children are 12 or 15 and they have never left their village. A 15-year-old is a mature person who has had so few life experiences, yet they tell me they can travel the world through a book. This really inspired me.”

Agnes, librarian in Laikipia county, Kenya
The need and our response

Around the world millions of people cannot reach their full potential because they are unable to access the books they need to improve their life chances.

The books we provide create positive change in the following ways:

**Books to support literacy, education and study**

An estimated 780 million adults worldwide cannot read or write. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report estimates that 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty if all pupils left school with basic reading skills.

A 2004 World Bank study concluded that: “Textbooks and learning materials show the highest incidence of impact for improving primary school outcomes in many developing countries.” These books improve literacy and wider educational attainment, yet there is an acute global shortage of books in schools.

A more recent study for secondary education found that 18 of 19 countries in sub-Saharan Africa suffered from a severe shortage of books for most students.

**Our response**

We supply a wide range of reading and curriculum support books, reference books and non-fiction for school libraries. We also run projects to set up school libraries and work with library outreach services which provide books in schools.

In addition, we work with NGOs that provide non-formal educational opportunities.

We also support the higher education sector with high-quality, current and relevant tertiary books in all subjects.

**Strategy in action: School outreach in Kenya**

The Kenya National Library Service’s School Outreach Programme improves access to reading materials for children in under-resourced schools. We support the programme by providing training for librarians and books to create school libraries.

7,940 children in 200 schools are already benefiting from the programme. Teachers report that pupils’ reading skills and test scores are improving.

A Kenyan pupil proudly demonstrates her reading skills
Books to support lifelong learning

One in ten people around the world live on less than $1.90 a day.\(\text{iv}\) For these people, and for the millions ‘just about managing’, accessing the information they need to improve their lives can be challenging. Most cannot afford to buy the books that could help them continue an interrupted education or learn how to start an income-generating business.

For professionals such as doctors, lawyers and public administrators access to recently published specialist texts is vital in order to update and renew skills and knowledge. Yet books in these subjects are often beyond the reach of those who need them most.

Our response

For all these individuals the library can be the best - and only - place to access information. We send books in a wide range of subjects, including entrepreneurship, life skills and technical and vocational education, to public libraries in towns and cities and to the most remote community libraries. We also support professionals by providing up-to-date texts to specialist libraries in locations such as hospitals.

Strategy in action: Lifelong learning in Uganda

The books we provide to community libraries create opportunities for people to improve their lives even if they have not completed formal education.

Kitengesa Community library is one of the rural community libraries we support in Uganda. Tony (shown left) is a local farmer who was unable to complete education because his family could not afford school fees. Despite this, he was able to use the library’s books to increase his crop yield and raise livestock to sell. He is now a successful local farmer who also mentors youths in the community.

Books to support a culture of reading

In many of the places where we work reading for pleasure is not viewed as important, with many countries acknowledging the ‘lack of a reading culture’. In addition to providing opportunities for relaxation and a refuge from day-to-day realities, reading for pleasure has a documented impact on reading fluency and confidence as well as personal, social and economic development.

Our response

A library can offer a safe space and a place to read in peace. We encourage reading for pleasure by sourcing enjoyable books that are loved around the world, particularly popular fiction and children’s books in both print and digital formats. We supply these books to places where a refuge from reality is most needed, such as refugee camps, slums and prisons. We also support the work of local libraries that are advocating for the value of reading in their own communities by helping them run reading promotion events.

Strategy in action: International Literacy Day in Ethiopia

Every year on International Literacy Day we support community events run by local libraries which encourage people to read. In Ethiopia, one mother’s comment after attending a reading promotion event showcases the events’ impact:

“I will bring my younger children to use the Children’s Corner. My older children have already benefitted, now I want the others to start using the library from a younger age.”

Reading promotion event in Sheno library, rural Ethiopia
Achievements and learning

Our vision for 2020 will build on our achievements and lessons learned during our 2014-16 strategic period.

The growing need for books
Between 2014 and 2016 we sent over 3 million books to readers in libraries across Africa and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, double the number sent during the previous three years. We were able to respond to more requests for books and extend our reach to new countries, such as Sierra Leone. In 2016 alone, the books we sent reached an estimated 29 million people.

What we have learned
Demand for books is growing strongly as the importance of literacy as a key tool for development is increasingly acknowledged both by people in the communities where we work and in the global development community through the Sustainable Development Goals.

The value of investing in local librarians
In the last three years, we developed two related programmes centered on young readers which included a strong element of training librarians and teachers. The first, our Children’s Corners programme, encourages young children to read through the establishment of welcoming spaces for children in public libraries and the training of librarians in how to support young readers. The second, Inspiring Readers, supports children’s education through school library development and teacher training in how to use books in the classroom. Together, these programmes have benefited 524,252 children and trained 525 teachers and librarians.

What we have learned
There is clear benefit to supporting book donations with training for librarians and teachers. These benefits include adults who are more confident in working with young readers, enhanced use of the library collection, local capacity development and community recognition of the value of the resource.

The importance of innovation
Since 2014 we have developed a range of innovative pilot projects designed to give children the opportunity to read e-books on e-readers and tablets in their local library. In 2016 alone, we sent over 40,100 digital titles on 240 e-readers and tablets. We are closely monitoring the outcomes and impacts of these projects as we plan our programmes for the future.

What we have learned
Children respond very strongly and positively to technology, the availability of which encourages them to visit the library and read books - both on e-readers and in print. New technology is in demand by the general public and increases the status of the libraries offering it, and the use of these libraries.

The value of partnership
In the last three years we have greatly increased the range of our partnerships with library services, NGOs and community groups, all of whom help us deliver our work on the ground. Today, we have 64 partners in 14 countries.

What we have learned
Through effective local and international partnerships we can work in a wide variety of locations and situations and support otherwise hard-to-reach communities in a cost effective, responsive and flexible way. This enables us to extend our resources to even more beneficiaries.
Our vision for 2020

Moving forward, we will ensure that the books we send reach the people who face the greatest barriers to reading and learning.

As we realise our vision for 2020 we remain committed to ensuring that the books we provide give as many people as possible the opportunity to read for pleasure, study and lifelong learning.

We will continue to supply books and develop innovative projects with national library networks which perform many vital services, such as making books and e-resources available to the general public, donating books to schools and providing important outreach to communities.

We will also support schools and higher education institutions with books for pupils and students of all ages and in all disciplines.

We recognise, however, that in a fast-changing world many disadvantaged groups and communities face particular challenges when they seek to access books and read.

Our Vision 2020: Where Books Change Lives strategy will focus on reaching people and communities - within and beyond Africa - who face the greatest barriers to reading and who have a particularly urgent need for high-quality, up-to-date books to improve and change their lives.

Where we will work

We know that many of the world’s most marginalised communities are in Africa and that many of our existing African partners are working to support those communities. Much of our work will therefore continue to be in Africa.

However as part of our Vision 2020: Where Books Change Lives strategy we will be open to supporting communities, wherever they are in the world who are in need of books in English, provided that they meet our criteria for support and as resources allow.
Who we will help

Between now and 2020 we will prioritise five main beneficiary groups who face the greatest challenges to accessing books.

People who have been displaced or who live in fragile states

An unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. People who have fled because of conflict or economic hardship often have little access to education or to the information they need to improve their life chances.

States struggling to re-establish public services after a prolonged period of conflict, epidemic, natural disaster, political crisis or economic downturn are also in particular need of support to rebuild their information resources, but often lack the funds they need to buy books.

Our response

We will work in partnership with agencies and NGOs that serve displaced people, people living in fragile states and conflict-affected communities to create access to books for all ages, especially children. We recognise that we will face new challenges in reaching these communities and we are committed to working with new partners to overcome these obstacles and reach those who need books most.

Pupils and students in poorly resourced schools

The availability of educational materials such as textbooks and reading books is a major factor impacting education quality.

Several studies in Africa have documented the strong positive effects of books on learning achievement, yet in many developing countries the supply of textbooks and reading books for pupils in schools is simply not sufficient.

Our response

We will focus on ensuring that books that support literacy and education reach pupils and students in the most deprived schools. These books will supplement the few resources schools have by creating school libraries or small ‘libraries in a box’.

We will also work with public libraries to support school outreach programmes, mobile services and reading promotion activities for school pupils.
Strategy in action: Occupied Palestinian Territories

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories many educational institutions are unable to source their own learning materials because of restrictions on freedom of movement and a lack of financial resources. Conflict also disrupts many young peoples’ education.

In these circumstances, libraries have a vital role in providing access to books, information and a refuge from the turmoil of day to day life. We support more than 100 libraries in the Occupied Palestinian Territories which give readers the chance to learn and grow.

Strategy in action: Sierra Leone’s schools

From 2014 to 2016, Ebola claimed almost 4,000 lives in Sierra Leone. Many schools suffered from a severe lack of books even before the epidemic forced them to close for an entire school year. Now, as children attempt to get back to learning, they have even fewer resources than before the crisis.

We are supporting Sierra Leone’s recovery by sending brand new books which will help communities rebuild. These carefully selected books have reached over 200 schools across the country. They are now helping pupils catch up on the learning they missed and enjoy reading in their schools, often for the first time.
**Learners in the community**

Many people living in remote communities or in urban slums miss out on traditional educational opportunities and cannot access public libraries. They rely on community libraries run by volunteers, NGO-run programmes providing education and literacy initiatives, library outreach services and other non-formal education services.

These organisations provide vital information, education and leisure resources for children and adults in rural, peri-urban and urban communities. They need good quality, up-to-date books; however they rarely have a budget for book purchase and their collections are often out-of-date and in poor condition, limiting their effectiveness.

**Our response**

We will support the work of NGOs, Community Based Organisations and other groups which offer out-of-school learning opportunities for both children and adults by providing books to support their initiatives. We will also work with community libraries and grassroots organisations to provide books for their readers and offer projects that train volunteer librarians in how to run a library and support readers.

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**Healthcare providers and educators**

Practising health care professionals and medical students whose work has the potential to improve the quality of life of their communities need up-to-date and relevant medical textbooks. However, availability and budget puts these vital resources out of the reach of many hospitals, universities and medical training schools.

**Our response**

We will upscale our work to source relevant books and provide them to healthcare institutions within and beyond our current networks, working closely with their librarians to meet specific needs.

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**Excluded or disadvantaged groups and individuals**

Many people and communities face barriers to accessing books and educational opportunities that might improve their lives. Whether marginalised by disability, gender or ethnicity or excluded by imprisonment or discrimination, these individuals have a particular need for books so that they can create a more positive future.

**Our response**

We will ensure that our work supports groups offering opportunities for everyone to access books, whatever their circumstances. We will work in partnership with organisations that have the requirements of these marginalised communities at the heart of what they do.
Strategy in action: Libraries in slum communities

Libraries in slum areas offer opportunities for everyone in the community to learn, study and enjoy reading.

In Mathare, one of Nairobi’s largest slums, we provide books and training for two community libraries run by a local NGO, Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA).

The new books we send provide a vital opportunity to access up-to-date information. This information is especially important for those who are struggling to learn outside of formal education settings.

A girl discovering books in MYSA’s library, Kenya

Strategy in action: Uganda Referral Hospitals

Uganda’s Regional Referral Hospitals offer healthcare services to thousands of people in Uganda, yet the hospitals previously lacked access to up-to-date health books in their medical libraries. This left staff without access to the information they need to provide the best possible care for patients.

As part of our Books for Health programme, we provide new medical books as well as training in how best to manage their medical libraries in three Referral Hospitals. The programme is contributing to improving the quality of care for an estimated 65,000 hospital patients.

Dr. Dan Masereka with one of the books he uses at Soroti Hospital, Uganda

Strategy in action: Prison libraries

Books in prison libraries provide an opportunity for inmates to prepare for their futures. With the help of a library, prisoners can continue their education and use books to learn new skills.

We work with a range of organisations which specialise in supporting prisoners. One of those charities is the African Prisons Project (APP). Every year, we send thousands of books to APP which are helping inmates in Uganda and Kenya become literate, learn and achieve their goals.

Guards join inmates in the Kampala Remand Prison library in Uganda
Realising our vision

Over the next four years we will seek new partnerships, supporters and innovative ways of reaching those who face the greatest barriers to accessing books.

To realise our vision for 2020, we will focus on four key priorities:

**Increasing our capacity**

We will work to find new supporters who can provide the books, funds and practical support we need to grow our capacity and increase our reach.

**Developing new partnerships**

We will seek new partners and increase our engagement with existing partners who already reach our target beneficiary groups.

Some of our priority groups may be in sensitive geographical or political situations. Working with experienced partners will ensure that our books get to the intended users and have the desired impact.

**Staying innovative**

We recognise that reaching marginalised communities may require us to work in new ways. We are prepared to embrace the changes that will be required as we implement our new strategy.

We will continue to be at the forefront of innovation through librarian training, reading promotion activity and the integration of digital technology and content, particularly for children, into libraries.

**Managing change**

As a small charity it will be critical that we manage the pace of change over the next four years, continuing to operate within our resources and balance the cost of new programme areas with commitments to existing partners, but scaling down work where our support becomes less needed.

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**Strategy in action: Expanding our reach**

Since 2014, we have doubled our capacity to source and send books. We are now sending more than one million books a year to thousands of libraries. Many of these libraries work in places where the need for books is acute, such as Sierra Leone.

Never the less, every year, we receive more requests for books than we can fulfil. The demand for books continues to grow. We will respond to this need by continuing to invest in our capacity to send more books and expanding our network to reach more libraries throughout, and beyond, Africa.

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Books arrive in Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown
Principles, priorities and targets
As we realise our vision we are committed to our strategic principles, which are:

• Working only in countries where books in English are valued and can help people improve their lives.
• Being partner-led, as our partners are the experts in how best to support the most vulnerable in their own societies.
• Innovating in the field of library development and offering programmes that help libraries become more active and sustainable.
• Honouring our commitment to quality by carefully selecting the books we send.
• Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of our activities and the usefulness of the books we donate.

Our strategic priorities for the period are to:

• Support libraries and other institutions in the promotion of reading for pleasure, study and lifelong learning for all.
• Extend support to vulnerable groups displaced by crises such as conflict.
• Work in effective partnership with organisations delivering real improvements in education to resource-poor schools.
• Support informal groups and volunteer organisations bringing books to their schools, libraries and communities.
• Work with health workers and medical professionals delivering frontline services in hospitals or training tomorrow’s health professionals.
• Offer equal opportunities to read for those excluded by gender, disability, or minority or vulnerable group status.

A key part of realising our vision is setting ambitious targets. By 2020, we aim to:

• Increase the number of books we send every year to 1.5m.
• Donate an estimated 35% of these books specifically to our five priority beneficiary groups.
• Continue our work to encourage children’s reading by reaching our target of establishing over 150 Children’s Corners in public and community libraries.
• Support over 250,000 school pupils with reading resources through our schools outreach programme Inspiring Readers.
• Advocate for the value of reading and be able to demonstrate that we have helped to support and develop a culture of reading.
Conclusion

Our strategy responds to the ongoing need for books and information in an increasingly complex and challenging world.

It also confirms our commitment to supporting communities around the world in their efforts to build a better future.

As we begin new initiatives and projects to reach our target beneficiaries over the next four years we will do so with a commitment to listen and to learn about how we can best serve all of our beneficiaries.

Implementing our strategy moves us closer to our vision of a world where everyone has access to the books they need. We look forward to the opportunities and challenges that the next four years will hold.

As we embark on this ambitious plan we are already looking beyond 2020. The world will not stand still over the next four years and our commitment to reaching those who need books most means that we must continue to evolve in line with their changing needs.

We are enormously grateful to our many supporters who have given books, time and funds to support our work. We extend a warm invitation to all of our supporters to join us as we take this next step toward a world where everyone has access to the books they need to enrich, improve and change their lives.

Find out more

To learn more about our strategy or support our work please:

Visit  www.bookaid.org/aboutus/our-vision-for-2020/
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We would like to thank PwC for their expertise and guidance through the process of identifying and reaffirming our strategic priorities and setting the future direction of the charity.


1 The World Bank Operations Evaluation Department. Determinants of Primary Education Outcomes in Developing Countries Background Paper for the Evaluation of the World Bank’s Support to Primary Education, 2004

1 Birger Fredriksen and Sukhdeep Brar. 2015. Getting Textbooks to Every Child in Sub-Saharan Africa: Strategies for Addressing the High Cost and Low Availability Problem. © World Bank. Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO


1 UNHCR, Figures at a glance. www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html
Books in libraries help close the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' as everyone can have access to relevant materials.

Katharine, University Librarian in Zimbabwe