

Uganda Reading Promotion 2016: Outcomes and learning

In 2016, Book Aid International piloted a reading promotion programme. The charity provided funding, marketing materials, advice and support to allow libraries to hold reading promotion events on or around International Literacy Day 2016.

Each participating library prepared a report on their activities, learning and impacts as well as their hopes for future reading promotion activities.

The following report was prepared by the staff of Book Aid International partner in Uganda, National Library of Uganda.

Description of participating library

Hoima Library is a public library that was established by Public Libraries Board which later became National Library of Uganda by an Act of Parliament, 2003 . It receives on average 240 users per day and has two vibrant sections; adult wing and children's wing

It has projects that are being undertaken in partnership with Book Aid International such as; Children's Corner and digital literacy training for children, a Blog for Youth on Health Issues under the Electronic Information for Libraries and a library building construction project under Hoima Municipal Council.

Most of the users are students from surrounding primary, secondary, tertiary and higher institutions (colleges, universities). It has three staff and four volunteers.

The library serves a heterogeneous community since it is a town. There are business people, students, farmers and civil servants. The community speak Runyoro, a local language 65% and other languages 35%.

The reading promotion event

It was at 8:15am Thursday 8th September 2016 when the gates of the library were opened to the visitors. Not as usual, the whole library compound was dotted with excited people erecting tents and carrying both tables and chairs arranging the adult section with decorations. Both librarians and library volunteers were busy arranging the Children's Corner for the event ready to welcome anxious children together with their teachers and other invited guests.

At around 9:30am, visitors started arriving one by one and soft music played in the background as they took seats in the tent.

At 10:00am, pupils from St. Jude Primary School arrived and were ushered into the children's library by one of the library staff; Ms Kugonza Gorret who took them around the Children's Corner.

At 10:36am, two schools arrived; Hoima Public Primary School and Central School. They were also ushered in the Children's Corner.

These three schools were the only schools that had accepted to attend the event before they broke off for holidays.

Children were later grouped to perform different activities; spelling competitions, read aloud, storytelling and others gave e-reader demonstrations.

Parents who gathered at the library also joined the children in the children's library and the place seemed as busy as a bee hive with different activities of all sorts.

Parents at this time were asking different questions from both library staff and volunteers about the library programs and who were the partners that had made both adult and children's library vibrant the way it was.

Visitors were able to notice from engraved furniture and books that Book Aid International was the partner that was behind all the library developments in the children's library.

Towards 11:00am, reporters from local radio stations; Radio Hoima, Liberty FM, Spice FM, Bunyoro television, Newvision agent and Wamanya ;a local language newspaper (Runyoro – Rutooro) had arrived moving from one place to other interviewing visitors, making calls back to radio stations updating them about the progress of the function.

Finally, the Chief Guest Hon. Kusiima Doreen arrived; Chairperson Community affairs of Hoima Municipal Council with three other councillors; Hon. Kasajja for Production, Hon. Baraza Godfrey for Education and Health.

Among other guests who were present:

- Mr. Kaseregenyi Daniel, Ag.Town Clerk
- Mr. Adoye Primo, Academic Registrar, Gulu University - Hoima Campus
- Mr. Yoram Matayo Ex-Prime Minister, Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom

Before the Guest of Honour arrived, both visitors and students had marched around Hoima Town which was interrupted by the rain for a while but finally stopped and the marching went on and attracted a big crowd both adults and children.

After the children's activities at around 1:45 PM, the guests, visitors and children gathered in the tents and speeches and prize giving began.

Speeches consisted that of; Librarian, Book Aid International, Ag. Town Clerk and lastly the Guest of Honour.

The two winning schools from St. Jude Primary School and Hoima Public Primary School each received a box of new books from Book Aid International and the rest of the pupils received books and pencils respectively.

Refreshments were served while listening to soft music.

Importance of using library was emphasised and reading as a way of enriching oneself. Children were also able to entertain the guests with poems, songs about Literacy Day and dance and drama among others.

The function was well attended by 238 registered people including school children.

I hope since this was the first time of its kind to celebrate International Literacy Day at Hoima Public Library, subsequent celebrations will pull a bigger crowd than this number.

The function ended at 4:15PM.

Media

Three local radios stations; Radio Hoima, Liberty Fm, and Spice FM. They all broadcasted the event during that very evening after the event and the following morning, calling people to use the library. Bunyoro television, a local station, also did wonderful task to show people what took place at the library.

Feedback

Hon. Kusiima Doreen, Chairperson, Community Affairs of Hoima Municipal Council who represented the Mayor attended and encouraged people always read books not only for passing exams but also for pleasure. She insisted that parents should be example of their children by participating in reading with their children.

Parents were happy with the children library with very good books with stories for the young ones and pledged to keep bringing their children to the corner and for e-reader training.

Plays also attracted the attention of parents.

Visitors were so happy with good work Book Aid International has done for both the children's corner and adults' library and promised to keep borrowing books for their children.

People were happy to have fun, learn and seeing their children participate in different activities during the event.

For whom has the change occurred?

The library is now more known to the community than before because of massive promotion by the media and since we are fundraising for the construction of a new library people have started pledging for support.

Has the change been significant?

Yes. More people come looking for certain books which were heard on the radio. We have seen a 12% increase on the number of users who borrow books for their leisure reading.

What led to the change?

Radio stations came in to publicise the event and because of their wide coverage, people learnt more about the library and this would not have happened without funding from Book Aid International. Hoima Public Library with its meagre resources would not have managed to organise such a big event

How would you seek to improve this intervention?

Most of the people are still illiterate and one way of eradicating illiteracy is by reading. This event gave a boost to the library as most of the stake holders took part there by marketing the library to the community.

If funds would allow, I would have a whole week of activities concerning literacy and the last day would be the climax. This would bring different stakeholders more on board.

Find out more

To learn more about Book Aid International's work, visit www.bookaid.org

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