Books change lives

BookLinks
Sharing information across libraries in Africa and beyond

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Welcome

Dear partner,

This issue of BookLinks seeks to offer you ideas, inspiration and information to enrich your work while celebrating the important successes and milestones which we have reached together.

This issue features our final report featuring the learnings from one of our largest programmes to date, Open Doors Children’s Corners. There have already been more than 780,000 child visits to local Children’s Corners. Through your hard work, these children have books and the support they need as they explore a new world of reading. This issue of BookLinks summarises learnings from the programme and looks to the future.

This issue’s news section also includes a very important milestone: the millionth book of 2018 is on its way to one of our newest partners, Mercy Corps in Jordan. This partnership is just one of the many new, dynamic partnerships with organisations which make books part of their life-changing work that we are forming and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Mercy Corps. Through the NGO’s network, the books we can provide will reach people whose lives have been shattered by conflict.

I would also like to extend a very warm welcome to our two newest library partners: The Gambia National Library Service Authority and the Ghana Library Authority. Both will distribute the brand new, carefully selected books they receive throughout their networks.

This issue also features a story of how librarians in Zimbabwe are using books to beat poverty, an overview of how you are promoting reading and top tips on keeping children safe in your library or reading space. As always, I hope you enjoy this issue of BookLinks warmly thank you for your on-going partnership.

Alison Tweed
Chief Executive
Book Aid International

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One millionth book of 2018 on its way to Jordan

We are delighted to announce that 2018’s millionth book is already on its way to support Syrian refugees in Jordan!

The millionth book is a sought-after medical text donated by Elsevier. The book will soon reach Mercy Corps in Jordan where it will become part of a community library, available to displaced Syrians and Jordanians alike.

Sending the millionth book would not have been possible without partners like you who keep putting the books we provide to work. Thank you for all you do!

Books to the Far East

As part of our work providing books to those who need them most we are very pleased to announce that we have donated books to Bhutan and Nepal. In Bhutan we have shipped 5,106 books to READ Bhutan to support their nine community libraries.

In Nepal we have provided 205 books in dentistry and facial reconstruction to support the Future Faces project in Nepal, a charity which works with people who have facial deformities.

African young people recognised by international essay competition

Last year, we asked you to encourage young people to have their voices heard by entering in The Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition. We asked, and you answered. With your support, the first young people in recent memory entered from Sierra Leone, entries from Malawi doubled and Zambian entries increased by 10. Many of the young people’s entries were recognised for their merit. In Sierra Leone, one entry won gold, two won silver and five won bronze.

Every entry will receive a certificate, which can support young people in their applications for jobs, school places and scholarships. Further, encouraging young people to enter the competition can motivate young readers to engage with the written word and be a part of the Commonwealth community. We will once again support The Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition in 2019, so look out for more information in your shipments.

Recently unpacked books in Nepal.

Our operations team packing the millionth book.
Books beating poverty

In Zimbabwe’s impoverished Gwanda region, The Edward Ndlovu Memorial Trust is using books to help build livelihoods.

We spoke to Jackson, Director of the Library Service, about their project and how other libraries can learn from their experiences.

**What is the situation for people in Gwanda, and how is the trust helping?**

In the rural areas of Gwanda, almost everyone is unemployed and lives on subsistence farming. But this is affected by poor rains. Literally some people had nothing – no food, no income, no blankets, no cooking utensils. The whole community in Gwanda was so destitute and so poverty ridden that we felt something should be done – but it should be the people themselves that do it, not someone donating food or money.

So we started the Study Circles programme. The Study Circles programme is community development at a very basic level. It is all about co-operative learning through democratic participation and reading. Everyone participates and draws on his or her own experience, particularly the older women. They have a lot of indigenous information about how they have attended to challenges in the past. We wanted to bring all that together and add the new technologies and ideas from books.

**How does a Study Circle work in practice?**

They are based out of schools because in rural areas, schools are central points where villagers meet. Everybody sends their child or grandchildren to the school. At first we went into deep discussions with villages: what could they do on their own which we could support? Some people were saying they didn’t have fresh vegetables, some said ‘we want to have chickens’, some said ‘we want to keep goats’.

Next, we agreed to work with those communities and invited them to form groups. At this stage, we suggested they also engage in reading. Reading is mostly associated with education, to write exams. We said, ‘let’s read to improve your livelihood’.

Then, we helped them to come up with a programme as a group. We asked them to work out what they needed. For example, water, a fence to keep animals out, what vegetables they wanted to grow.

All the topics they were discussing, it was our duty to find the relevant books. We talked to members and they gave us a list of what they wanted to read and we also invited the teacher-librarian from the school to select books because they are better positioned to know what is wanted in their area.

In every meeting, they use two books. One about their project and one for a more thematic discussion like their rights or how to get a passport. We also supply them with books on how to do banking, how to do saving, how to calculate your profit and loss.

**What changes have you seen because of the Study Circles?**

We now have 31 groups and they are very viable groups. Some have started gardens or rear goats. One is the chicken project – they started with 15 chickens and now have capacity to rear 1,000 chickens in five weeks to sell. That’s amazing – here is a form of employment.

We have also seen changes in the individual people who attend. The majority of people in these Study Circles are women and their average age is 60. They had not had the chance to read for possibly the past 40 years. First of all we read in our local language, Ndebele, and then we graduated to English.

We also talked to them about their lives and the issues they face. So alongside the topics for their project, they also agreed themes to discuss around issues that were affecting them: unemployment, HIV and AIDS, poor nutrition, climate change, rights.

Before, women were quiet at meetings with men. Now the women can question things, contribute to debates and they know their rights. They are able to stand up and articulate their challenges. When they go to a meeting at school, they know the rights of their children. When one is sick, they know that person should be persuaded to go to the clinic. HIV and AIDS used to be a disease in suspicion but now people have really opened up. And all this is because we have been able to supply the relevant books to equip them.

**What is your hope for the future?**

I am hopeful that the projects that we have developed are sustained and carried forward from one generation to another. Ultimately we want to see some entrepreneurship development. We want a business culture to develop and small enterprises to be set up: those who are doing the vegetable gardens canning or drying them and packaging them for sale. Chickens being frozen for sale.

**Do you have any tips for other libraries which think the Study Circle is a good idea?**

I think a lot of libraries can do study circles. To start, identify a school, because literally everywhere in Africa there should be a school. Identify a school, talk to the headmaster or the manager of the school, agree with them to say the school can be an access point both for learning and also for community development. The school is the place where a small start that can grow out can be established.
The impact of Open Doors Children’s Corners

The Open Doors Children’s Corners programme began in 2014 with the intention of creating 60 Children’s Corners in six countries.

By the end of 2016, the fundraising target of £500,000 had been surpassed and in 2017 the final Open Doors Children’s Corner opened its doors.

The aim of every Children’s Corner is to enable children to reach their potential through access to quality reading materials and activities in well-resourced and managed libraries. In each library, three elements transform children’s experience of reading: brand new books for children donated from the UK and purchased locally, training for librarians in how to support young readers and funds to refurbish the library, creating a child-friendly space.

Over the life of the four year programme, 107,174 UK donated books were distributed to the 60 Children’s Corners and a total of £41,735 was disbursed in grants for local book purchase, with at least 21,857 locally published books purchased in English and 22 local African languages.

Following the project’s completion, we have now created a report summarising the impact of the Open Doors Children’s Corners. While there were challenges around collecting data, the evaluation revealed that children love the books and the experience of being in a corner devoted to them and their reading journeys.

Findings pointed towards clear usage of the books by children, who found the space welcoming and exciting. All libraries reported an increase in the number of children visiting and spending time with books in the Children’s Corner. Where libraries permitted children to borrow books and where they kept records, an increase in the number of books lent to children was also reported. We also saw widespread anecdotal reporting of children staying longer in the library space, engrossed in reading.

With few if any librarian led activities recalled at baseline, the activities facilitated post librarian training increased in quantity and range. Again, with inconsistent recording for the majority of services, data on the number of activities run per week were not captured. However evidence of timetabling, observations of activities being delivered, arts and crafts being displayed, photos taken of activities in full swing, children’s own reports through focus groups in final evaluations all point to activities being run during the life of the project and, depending on the motivation and passion of the librarian, beyond that point.

With all Children’s Corners launched and the overall level of activity raised in the libraries, parents and teachers from surrounding schools responded in support of the new services to children. Parents took greater interest and supported their children’s attendance and other local education officials showed their support for creating a new perception of the service.

To deepen our understanding of the impact of the Open Doors Children’s Corner, in 2017 we held a multi-stakeholder reflection reporting exercise, inviting a range of stakeholders to reflect and report on the changes that had taken place and that they attributed to the Open Doors Children’s Corner. This exercise highlighted the impact of the Open Doors Children’s Corners on the way the service is delivered to children, the librarian’s confidence, behaviour and practice, the children’s engagement with the books and the perceived value of the library by community members.

Of course, the report also revealed challenges. Unintended consequences included an increased number of children in the library space which put pressure on limited facilities and overstretched staff. Not all staff who attended training took their learnings back into the library. We had also started losing trust with the teachers because of the old and used book stock. The books were worn out. The new book stock from the project made all the difference and the teachers have started using the new books.

“...The children had stopped visiting the library due to the lack of new story books – they saw no need to visit the library because they had read all the available story books. The new collection has attracted them back into the library. We had also started losing trust with the teachers because of the old and used book stock. The books were worn out. The new book stock from the project made all the difference and the teachers have started using the new books.”

Miriam, Head of Thika Library, Kenya.

As Book Aid International’s first large scale programme, Open Doors Children’s Corners has strengthened our capacity to meet the needs of children while building capacity amongst librarians and meeting the expectations of parents and the local community. While Open Doors is over, the Children’s Corners programme continues to grow and evolve. The next step in creating spaces where children’s reading can flourish in libraries around the world is well under way, and we look forward to working with our partners to reach more children.

We would like to thank all of the many partners who worked with us to open all 60 Open Doors Children’s Corners; the funders who gave generously to make the project possible and the many librarians who undertook the challenge of finding a new way to work with children.

To read the full report, visit bookaid.org/publications/2018/10/19/open-doors-childrens-corners-outcomes-and-lessons/
Africa speaks up for reading

Since 2016, we have provided funds and resources to support our partners across Africa in advocating for reading and the work of library services.

In the first year only five countries took part – but in 2018 that number grew to 13, and participation has increased tenfold. In 2016, 523 adults and 737 children took part. This year, 1,541 adults and 8,515 children took part in the celebrations.

Partners are also evolving their reading promotion efforts, often funding more than one activity from their grant, engaging a more varied range of beneficiaries and using the events as an opportunity to advocate for more resources from Government representatives. The message of the value of the library is spreading far and wide and people are responding.

Here are a few highlights:

**Cameroon:** EISERVI ran the event in Yaounde, with guest of honour – a local Member of Parliament, supporting and 300 children taking part. Children and parents that were once unaware of the EISERVI library are now new visitors. The event was supported by NMMI and COSMOS publishers.

**Eritrea:** The Library & Information Association of Eritrea ran smaller events in 6 public libraries in Maebel and Ansebe regions including Hazhaz prison and rehabilitation centre. By working in these varied locations, LIAE engaged many different people and encouraged them to read.

**Ethiopia:** CODE Ethiopia celebrated at Ejere Public Library in Oromiya region which had recently seen a refurbishment of the children’s section. Supported by the local council Head of Culture and Tourism and Education, children, parents and teachers were appreciative of the new setting for reading.

**Kenya:** Kenya National Library Service used the opportunity to reach out to the community surrounding Kwale branch public library. The area had consistently registered academic performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) and students need a lot of encouragement to use the library and to read. More than 600 children and adults attended the event which was supported by Head of Social Services and County Education officials.

**Liberia:** The NGO We Care, ran an event in its library based in Monrovia. Celebrations involved library members who were previously illiterate and involved in the ‘We Care Family Literacy Initiative Program’ which teaches parents in order that they may prepare children for school. They spoke on how reading has impacted their lives and the lives of their children.

**Malawi:** The Malawi National Library Services ran their event in Lilongwe inviting schools within the Lilongwe City Area and supported by the Minister of Education, Science and Technology.

**Rwanda:** The Ineza Foundation used the opportunity to celebrate and launch the children’s corner in Rulindo district and Karangazi Library in Nyagatare district. Showcasing the resources with key messages on the importance of reading, partners were able to encourage children and parents to utilise the resources which are few in Rwanda.

**Sierra Leone:** The Sierra Leone Library Board welcomed children and their parents into the Head Quarters library in Freetown. For many of the 140 children, it was the first time they had visited the library. With support from the Chief Administrator of Freetown City Council, the event saw lots of TV and news coverage.

**Tanzania:** The Tanzania Library Services Board (TLSB) showcased their Children’s Corners and digital Kio Kits to the communities in Dar es Salaam. Teachers were impressed by the resources and the event has provided an opportunity for potential new partnerships with a local NGO “Creative Child In Education” seeking to collaborate with TLSB.

**Uganda:** The National Library of Uganda identified Lira Public Library where only 5% of local pupils passed primary leaving exams in 2017. The library is slowly making its mark and the event has brought reading and the library resources to the attention of more than 150 adults and children.

**Zambia:** Zambia Library Service (ZLS) librarians visited eight schools in Livingstone to run reading activities for children and spoke to teachers about the importance of reading. ZLS also used the opportunity to explain the partnership with Book Aid International, the flourishing Children’s Corners in the Provincial Libraries and urge the District Commissioner and the Town Clerk, who were in attendance, to include new resources and development of the City library.

**Zimbabwe:** Edward Ndlovu Memorial Library identified a local school for the event. Presentations included women from their Study Circles who shared how they formed agricultural groups and used the books to learn about and grow a range of crops and the impact this has on their livelihoods and life.
Let’s keep our children safe!

Book Aid International’s partners may have noticed some changes over the past year as we have updated our child safeguarding policy and procedures.

Here, we explore the reasons behind these policies and offer guidance for partners who may wish to refresh their own safeguarding policies.

What is ‘safeguarding’?
Child safeguarding can be defined as
“The responsibility that organisations have to make sure that their staff, operations and programmes do no harm to children and that any concerns that the organisation has about children’s safety within the communities in which they work are reported to local authorities.” Put simply, safeguarding is a method for organisations to protect children.

Book Aid International is proud of the work we do with partners to benefit children. Last year our books reached tens of thousands of children in schools, public and community libraries and refugee camps. It is vitally important that we do everything we can as an organisation to ensure the safety of those children.

Part of this process is about ensuring that our partners are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities when working with us. All of our partners are now required to sign a child safeguarding agreement outlining these responsibilities before working with us on projects. Responsibilities include promoting a strong safeguarding culture, complying with statutory regulations, ensuring staff understand child safeguarding procedures, and reporting incidents of harm to children within Book Aid international funded projects. We also require our partners to provide us with their own operational policies and procedures in relation to child safeguarding.

1. Know the global and local frameworks that uphold children’s rights

2. Involve a mix of stakeholders
Developing your safeguarding policy and procedures collaboratively will enable all to have a say and is likely to increase buy-in. Hold a meeting, workshop or surveys to consult with staff and members of the community. Listen to their ideas before finalising your policy.

3. Describe who your policy will apply to
There may be a range of people in your organisation that will need to know and sign up to your policy – staff, volunteers, board members, visitors and others. Specify who your policy will apply to and ensure that they are aware of it.

4. Define how you will keep children safe
Set out in detail what actions your organisation will take to prevent children from harm. Consider safeguarding within all areas of your organisation’s operation. Some suggestions are: recruitment, code of conduct, training, risk assessment, partner organisations, programme design, your environment and use of data, images and video footage.

5. Include advice on how to deal with a safeguarding incident or allegation of abuse
Even with strong preventative measures in place, concerns about a child, incidents or allegations of child abuse may arise. Prepare your staff with guidelines on how to deal with these cases.

Some suggestions are:
- Stay calm
- Seek medical help if necessary
- Take all allegations seriously
- Do not interrogate the person making the report, but accept what they have to say
- Offer reassurance that the person making the report has done the right thing
- Tell the person making the report you will have to report it and what you will do; do NOT promise confidentiality
- Make careful notes of what was said by you and the other person as soon as possible after the event and/or complete a reporting form

6. Set up a clear robust reporting process
You must put in place a strong reporting and follow-up procedure to ensure any safeguarding concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively. This should include details of what should be reported, who can report and who they report to, when to report, how to report and what should happen after a report is made. Making a reporting form available to staff can be helpful.

7. Ensure confidentiality
All information related to an allegation of child abuse is extremely sensitive. Ensure that any member of staff involved at any stage of responding or reporting an allegation of child abuse keeps the information confidential and only shares it with the staff necessary for the investigation. Developing a Whistle-blowing Policy ensures that any staff, partners and supporters who report a safeguarding concern in good faith will be fully supported.

8. Share your safeguarding policies and procedures
Don’t keep your safeguarding policy hidden away in a dusty file – share it! It is very important that everyone involved in your organisation knows the procedures to follow. Hold meetings to share the policy, ensure everyone working in your organisation has their own copy to refer to, hold regular safeguarding training, include it as part of your staff induction processes and share it with partner organisations.
ABOUT OUR CHARITY

Book Aid International is the UK’s leading international book donation and library development charity. Every year, we ship around one million books to thousands of libraries in communities where people have very few opportunities to access new books.

We work with an extensive network of libraries, schools, hospitals, NGOs and other partners to ensure that the books we send reach those who face the greatest barriers to accessing books. In addition, we also run library development projects which build the capacity of librarians to support readers and communities.

We only send books at our library partners’ request. These books are carefully selected by our UK team led by professional librarians to ensure that they meet the needs of local communities. All of the books we send are donated by the UK book trade so they are all new.

To find out more, visit www.bookaid.org.