Books change lives

BookLinks
Sharing information across libraries in Africa and beyond

November 19 / Issue 29
Dear partner,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to our second BookLinks of 2019.

BookLinks is your newsletter and every issue aims to spark new ideas of how you can encourage reading in your own communities, to offer tools that you can use in your library or school and to share your learnings and successes across our global network of diverse partners.

In this issue I am particularly delighted to feature one of our newest partners, the Silanyo National Library in Somaliland. I recently had the honour of visiting during the Hargeisa International Book Fair to see first-hand the impact that the library is having on people from all walks of life in Hargeisa. The vibrant fair was a wonderful illustration of the commitment to books and reading which thrives in communities around the world, and we remain committed to providing the brand new, high quality books that you need to help people improve their lives.

This issue also features a new set of materials that you can use to encourage young readers to care for their books, details of the impact that books are having in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Northern Kenya and a report on your work promoting reading on International Literacy Day.

These are just a few of many examples of how you are using the books we send to change lives. I hope you are inspired by what you read today and we remain thankful for your partnership.

We are always keen to feature our new partners and the inspiring individuals in your networks in BookLinks, so if you have a story that you think should be shared please don’t hesitate to get in touch.

Very best regards,

[Signature]

Alison Tweed
Chief Executive

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BookLinks is our bi-annual publication for library practitioners. Through BookLinks we aim to share the good practice, insights, learnings and knowledge from our project work, partners and the wider library world.

BookLinks is published with the support of a grant from the Unwin Charitable Trust and we are delighted to be among its beneficiaries.

Cover image: Children at M-LISADA enjoying new books donated by Book Aid International as part of the Book Havens project in Uganda.

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**NEWS:**

**Millionth book sent in 2019!**

For the fourth time, Book Aid International has reached the million book mark. The 2019 millionth book was in the latest shipment for Ghana Library Authority, which left our warehouse on 11th November.

**IFLA WLIC 2020**

The IFLA World Library and Information Congress 2020 will be held in Dublin, Ireland from 15th-24th August. Registration is now open. The theme is Inspire, Engage, Enable, Connect.

https://2020.ifla.org

**African library services come together in Ghana**

In October, Book Aid International's Chief Executive Alison Tweed represented the charity at two key meetings for the African library world, the Meeting of Directors of Library Services and the 3rd Ministerial Round Table for African Ministers with responsibility for Libraries.

Both meetings were held in Accra, Ghana and were organised jointly by the Ministry of Education, Ghana and The Ghana Library Authority. Many of our African library partners participated and it was encouraging to hear how partnerships with Book Aid International and the books we provide have supported so many innovations.

The Round Table theme was 'Libraries on the African Development Agenda: Progress made' and featured presentations from library services across the continent. The Accra Declaration was agreed at the meeting and included pledges to support library development across the continent. Pledges included:

- Scale up advocacy for the inclusion of libraries in African countries’ development planning process;
- Intensify the call for inclusion of technology in African libraries, particularly public libraries, in terms of ICT facilities and free internet to expedite the development of our people;
- Promote ideas and support African Library and Information Associations and Institutions as the leading continental mouthpiece for ensuring favourable policies for the work of libraries and the building of professional expertise of African librarians.

African Ministers meet to discuss future developments in library services.
PERSONAL VOICE:

Rebuilding with books

The Director of Silanyo National Library in Somaliland explains how books are helping to rebuild his country after years of civil war.

Ahmed Dahir Elmi, the Director of Silanyo National Library in Somaliland first returned to Hargeisa in 2001, 13 years after he and his family left in 1988 during the civil war. He was delighted to find the country making great strides in rebuilding but noticed there was not a single library. Here Ahmed shares the inspiring story of how he went about setting up Somaliland’s very first national library.

“I came to the UK in 1990 as a young man and when I was working with British schools I saw so many libraries. In 2009, the Somaliland people who live in the UK elected me as the Chairman of the Somaliland Society in the UK. I said we should do something about our country and my first idea was a national library – to build the first library in Hargeisa, the city where I’m from.

The library opened in 2017 and now more than 4,000 people come to visit every month. We do so many different programmes because this is the first library for the whole city. We are not just a national library but a public library, too, because there is no public library.

The first new and large scale book donations we had were donated by Book Aid International and they helped us a lot, especially with the children’s section. Without those books, we wouldn’t have had a children’s section.

Education is important. Without books, you cannot learn anything. If you do not read, you cannot learn anything; you cannot get any knowledge. Reading books opens your eyes and broadens your knowledge. Reading is important in every culture, too.

Now we have an established children’s section, we are planning to do a ‘camel library’ carrying children’s books. It will visit villages and towns to reach the young people outside the city who don’t have access to schools or libraries - some of them maybe have never seen a book at all.

We are also encouraging every region and every city to build a library. Some of the regions have started and already completed. In Somaliland people copy each other – when you see a community or region doing a good thing, the other regions follow in their footsteps. It is a good thing and we want to do good things people can emulate.

The future of Somaliland is very bright and there is a lot of development going on. So, we say NOW it’s time for Africa, especially East Africa and Somaliland is the gate to Africa.”

Ahmed offloads a Book Aid International donation

There is also no children’s library in the whole city, so now we have established a children’s section. We do a reading club and a book club for the children – we want to create a reading culture. We also invite lecturers in to make speeches and share knowledge with the library users. University students come in too – this is the only place they can find good books and a place where they can study. And every day different schools visit us.

Silanyo National Library children’s section
Container library launch in Rwanda

Book Aid International creates access to books through its first container library project

In November, we launched our very first Voyager Container Library in partnership with INEZA Foundation and Gasabo District Council in Rwanda.

The new Voyager Container Library is situated in Gasave village in Kigali and is made from INEZA Foundation’s own used 40ft shipping container. With support from Book Aid International, it has been painted, refitted with shelves and filled with brand new books making it a resource to address the book needs of ECD, primary and secondary school children in the area.

We hope to create more voyager container libraries in the future. With thanks to players of People’s Postcode Lottery who generously funded this Voyager Container Library.

[Images of the container library and its contents]

The 40 foot container arriving on site

A larger slab and overhanging roof provide shelter and seating

5,000 books shelved

Final paintwork and inclusion of toilets. The library was launched in November 2019
Reading Promotion campaign, 2019

Impact of the 2019 Reading Promotion campaign - reasons to be cheerful!

2019 is the fourth year of Book Aid International’s campaign with partners to promote reading in communities across the continent. The purpose of the campaign is to support and amplify the voice of the library service through promoting the importance of reading, the value of books for education, personal development, life-long learning and wellbeing.

Fifteen countries in east, west and southern Africa participated by hosting events to encourage communities to read and use the library service.

The campaign focuses on an event on or around International Literacy Day on 8th September, to engage children and adults in a range of fun games, talks and competitions. Library teams invite local dignitaries, authorities and influencers to see the work at the library close up, but also to be part of sending out clear positive messages about the benefits of reading. The local and mass media is also invited: interviews are given and local articles, TV footage and radio programmes are created to broadcast the message that the library is vibrant and reading is still of great value to all ages. Invited publishers and even local writers share their work and encourage reading.

But what impact do the events have beyond expressions of enjoying the day? While it is impossible to fully know what impact any event has, the library teams report some of the actions and responses observed during and soon after the event which we can interpret as indicators of change, due to the success of the event, in whole or in part.

Impact

Our partners report on the impact of their events here:

Somaliland

“The school teachers decided to set a specific time for reading during their school hours. The children promised to read the books which they have taken and come back to the library to take more books.”

Tanzania

“Just the next day after the event parents and teachers brought their kids to the library for registering with the library book club as well as joining library membership.”

Ethiopia

“A printing house from the town printed banners and slogans for free. They appreciated the support rendered to the library and said it was the support from CODE Ethiopia and Book Aid International that inspired them to support the library.”

Cameroon

“Some of the community librarians called a day after the event to get more details of all the activities so as to run some of the activities in their community libraries. The number of people coming into the library has increased with children coming from the new schools that participated in the event.”

Ghana

“It’s been barely a week but more kids are visiting our library after the event and parents are making it mandatory to let their wards come to the library even if they cannot read with them at home.”

A District Commissioner presenting books to winning schools in Zambia
Uganda

"Many people, who had not been to this resource centre are now expressing interest in the centres’ work through telephone calls and visits."

Kenya

"We have more enquiries about our services and more schools have called asking how they can be engaged in library events. They are also interested in knowing how they can benefit with books for their schools especially for schools that were not involved in the event."

Zambia

"The District Commissioner himself actually instructed the school management that they should daily conduct literacy activities in their school libraries and for the schools without libraries to find a place."

Zanzibar

"The event reflected more changes to staff, children as well as community. For instance, the staff – they can work in a team, their confidence improved, they gain new skills and they are motivated."

Zambia

"Our staff members nationwide are now celebrating the event in their various libraries and also interested in implementing children’s programmes especially those that have to do with reading."

Sierra Leone

"Our staff at the reading tent were overwhelmed with the influx of the children demanding something to read."

Guest of Honour Hon. Sirriai Mohammed Said, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, Zanzibar

Sharing the vision – NGO INEZA Foundation in Rwanda with Mrs Geromine Gouleau, representative of the French embassy in Rwanda

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**STATS BOX**

2906  Children attended the events

847  Adults supported the events

23  Government officials supporting the events

18  TV stations broadcast the event

15  Participating countries

11  Radio stations broadcast the event

10  Newspaper journalists reported on the events

07  Online journalists attended the events

03  Publishers attended the event

**Countries:**
Teaching children how to care for books

Use our new book handling resources to teach children the value of caring for books

Many librarians will have experienced the frustrations of damaged and lost library books, so that library users are no longer able to benefit from reading them. Through our work with international library partners, staff at Book Aid International have heard many stories over the years of children drawing on books, losing books and even ripping out pages to burn on the fire at home!

Caring for books is something that children need to be taught, so that they know how to keep books in good condition and they understand why it is important. If children look after books, they will remain in good condition for longer, they will have a longer life and more readers will be able to use and enjoy them.

Book Aid International have designed a new pack of simple resources to help librarians (whether in public libraries, schools or community libraries) to teach children how to care for books.

The resources include child-friendly 'book' characters to help make the topic fun and engaging for children as well as lots of ideas for how to use them.

We will be sending these resources on book shipments for future projects focusing on children. We will also be introducing them in project training workshops so that our partners working with children are equipped to teach children to care for books. If you would like to request an electronic copy of the resources, please send an email to info@bookaid.org.

Book Aid International’s Africa Representative, James Kimani, uses the new poster to teach children at Kenya National Library Service, Nairobi, how to take care of books.
Packs will include:

- A pack with ideas for using each resource
- A story book about how to care for books
- A set of cards about how to care for books
- A poster showing how to care for books

**Your A2 poster in BookLinks**

To start you off, in this issue of BookLinks we are providing an A2 version of the poster for you to display in your library. The poster shows different methods of caring for books.

**Step 1:** Display this poster in your library or reading area, so that all library users can clearly see it.

**Step 2:** Refer children to the poster at the beginning of a library or reading session to remind them of how to take care of books. Ask them to explain each picture on the poster and why they should follow these book care instructions.

**Step 3:** When you see a child handling a book with care, give them verbal praise and point to the picture on the poster that they have followed.

**Step 4:** If you see a child who is not taking care of a book, point them to the relevant picture on the poster to remind them of what they should do.

Let’s teach children the value of taking care of library books!
Kakuma Solar Homework Club project

Our first solar homework project, in Kakuma Refugee Camp, is helping the most vulnerable students

Book Aid International in partnership with Windle International Kenya launched the Solar Homework Club project early in 2019. The project aims to support the provision of quality education by extending access to quality reading materials and solar lamps. It is the first of our projects with a focus on solar light in an area where the lack of electricity seriously limits opportunities for home learning.

As part of the project, six secondary schools in the camp were each provided with a set of 500 books to supplement their school library collections and over 140 solar lamps. Schools made plans to set up a lending system for lamps and books, so that students and teachers could read and study after dark at home or at school homework clubs.

We recently visited participating schools to find out what changes the project has brought for teachers and students:

**Solar lamps are supporting students, particularly the most vulnerable**

The solar lamps have been very popular. Students regularly borrow them to study at home in the evenings. They are particularly helping vulnerable students such as girls, for whom it is not safe to walk to and from school after dark, and students who are the heads of their families, who have many household chores and responsibilities to finish before nightfall.

“I have to do household chores after school until 7pm and when I’m ready to study it is dark and therefore unable to revise. I may even wake up early at 4am to revise if I have a lamp.”

**Student, Form 3**

**Solar lamps are supporting teachers**

Teachers are taking the opportunity to use solar lamps to prepare lessons and professional documents in the evening. They are also now able to set homework tasks that are achievable for students.

**Books are supporting self-study and learning**

The quality of donated subject books have aided children’s understanding, particularly in science and maths. The donation of the lamps complements the book donation, meaning that students can borrow and use books for home study. The books have also helped children to feel more confident in the classroom through improved knowledge, reading and language skills and have helped them to learn about the wider world.

“The good, colourful and clear diagrams help us to understand better. The GCSE Chemistry books show the colour of the chemicals. This helps us to understand because we are able to see how the different elements change colour.”

**Student. Form 1, Somali Bantu Secondary School**

**Youth fiction is motivating students to read**

Fiction books have also been appreciated by students and have helped to motivate them to read for leisure.

“I never used to like reading. But since the books were brought I now love reading because the books are very interesting. When reading you feel like you are inside the story.”

**Student. Form 1, Morneau Shepell Girls Secondary**

The project has already begun to change the way students learn and study in Kakuma. However, the need for more lamps and books persists due to high school enrolment rates and the arrival of new refugees in the camp every day. We therefore hope to continue the project into 2020 and extend the project model in other refugee camps.
Uganda Book Havens

Our Books Havens project in Uganda provides inspiration for creating vibrant children’s library spaces

This year Book Aid International and Uganda Community Library Association (UgCLA) have been implementing the Book Havens Uganda project. The project supports the development of libraries that serve communities in slum and rural areas of Uganda.

Back in February, over 10,000 books were donated and staff from community libraries, including Amka Foundation, Art of a Child, Condominium, M-Lisada and Mummy Foundation took part in training to help them set up spaces for children in their libraries and to improve services for children.

Reports have shown an impressive level of work from librarians to turn their libraries into attractive and well-used reading spaces for children.

“This now looks like a library, at first it was just a collection of books.”
*Allen, 15, user of Condominium Library*

A major success of the project is the strong level of creativity used in refurbishment of the Book Havens. Colourful murals have been painted, shelving has been crafted into creative shapes and child-friendly furniture and games make the libraries a fun and comfortable place for children to enjoy reading.

![Amka Foundation’s creative refurbishment](image)

**Five tips community libraries in Uganda can teach us about creating a vibrant children’s library environment**

1. **Paint bright, attractive and inspirational murals and quotes on your walls.**

2. **Get shelving made into creative and decorative shapes, at children’s height and display some books front-facing for ease of choosing a book.**

3. **Ensure tables and chairs are child-friendly sizes.**

4. **Use carpet or mats for children to sit and lie down on to read comfortably.**

5. **Keep the space tidy, safe from hazards and accessible for all children.**

![Art of a Child community library use bright designs, imaginative shelving and child-friendly seating to attract young readers](image)
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.

With thanks to players of People’s Postcode Lottery for funding the Rwanda Voyager Container Library project.