

Books change lives



*Learners with books from Book Aid International at Sosola Primary School, Malawi*

# Inspiring Readers programme final report September 2021

# Executive summary

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The *Inspiring Readers* programme concept aimed to contribute to educational provision in primary schools by setting up cupboard libraries and promoting reading, through a collaboration between schools and public libraries. This afforded primary school children the opportunity to develop an interest in and habit of reading, through regular access to child-friendly, age-appropriate materials.

Teachers and head teachers were trained by librarians from the public libraries before receiving the resources, so that they were able to effectively manage and use them. Teachers also had the opportunity to use a range of books to support early grade reading, to use for leisure reading during library periods, lunchtime and for borrowing, and to use as reference materials when teaching a range of subjects in the curriculum. Underpinning the programme were public librarians who provided an invaluable source of encouragement and support for schools to get their libraries up and running well. This additional layer of both support and accountability by librarians and teachers was key to the success of the programme.

In 2016 *Inspiring Readers* was piloted in 25 schools in Kenya in collaboration with the Kenya National Library Service. Results from the pilot revealed that, after implementation, the project schools had well-organised and accessible libraries managed by enthusiastic teachers who had been trained and supported by confident hub librarians. Teachers reported increased reading, improved confidence in using books, improved behaviour and better academic results among learners. The programme went on to work in Kenya, Cameroon, Malawi, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Zanzibar, covering 13 project tranches of the programme in total, with the overall goal being to make project schools *book rich, staffed by confident, capable and supportive teachers who incorporate regular reading into the school timetable and establish regular outreach contact between librarians and teachers.*

Overall, the programme had a positive impact on all participants. Children have developed positive attitudes towards books and reading and have shown increased self-esteem and confidence as a result. Vibrant school libraries have increased the profile of the schools within their communities and teachers have benefited from the enhanced teaching aids available to them. Librarians' knowledge and skills have grown and, as a result, positive working relationships between librarians and teachers have begun. Librarians are also more visible within their communities and feel more

respected. Within wider communities, there has been support for *Inspiring Readers* with parents borrowing books to read at home with their children and some communities actively fundraising to buy more books and shelving.

Although some challenges were faced, such as insecurity in some locations and the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, *Inspiring Readers* has proven to be an effective intervention to increase children's access to reading and learning materials and to give teachers and librarians the opportunity to collaborate effectively to support children's learning. The programme led to better outcomes for children attending the project schools, both in terms of academic achievement and broader life skills. The programme is therefore an effective model in improving primary education and has made a valuable contribution towards the aim of Sustainable Development Goal 4: '*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunity for all.*'

# Contents



Introduction	5
Programme description	7
Programme impact	9
Impact on schools	16
Impact on communities	23
Challenges	26
Lessons learnt	27
Conclusion	28
With thanks	31

# Introduction

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A school library helps teachers teach and learners learn; it fosters in learners a love of and enthusiasm for reading and encourages lifelong learning. However, across Africa, school libraries are often not prioritised, with schools rarely having access to professional librarians and often lacking relevant supplementary reading materials. For learners to develop skills for lifelong learning, they must be given the opportunities to enquire, to search, to explore, to practise and to solve problems. This can only be achieved through well-resourced libraries.

The *Inspiring Readers* programme was designed to facilitate and encourage reading in schools through developing and using school libraries, and was implemented in Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe between 2016 and 2021. The programme built on Book Aid International's successful work on the *Children's Corners* programme, where spaces were set up for children in public libraries, providing a range of children's library activities. It aimed to enhance the school outreach capacity of these libraries. The public library where the children's services are based acted as a 'hub' to distribute books, procure a book cupboard and book boxes, as well as train, support and monitor teachers in five primary schools in each of their areas.

## Programme aim, objectives, outputs and outcome

**Programme aim:** To increase children's access to reading materials and to support primary schools to effectively promote reading, with the goal of improving children's confidence and learning.

**Programme objectives:** The overall goal of the programme was to establish book-rich school libraries managed by confident, capable and supportive teachers, attended by children who enjoy regular reading and supported by regular outreach from local librarians.

The programme had five specific objectives:

- i. Develop librarians' skills in supporting teachers' management of school libraries and their professional development in promoting reading and learning and assisting public libraries to develop their outreach programme capacity.

- ii. Increase children's interaction with new reading material in both local languages and English.
- iii. Develop the confidence and skills of pupils through using reading materials and developing a reading habit.
- iv. Equip teachers with enhanced skills and knowledge to increase their confidence to support children in reading and learning.
- v. Encourage head teachers to increase opportunities for teachers and pupils to make the most of their Book Box Libraries.

**Key outputs:** The key outputs of the programme are shown in the following table

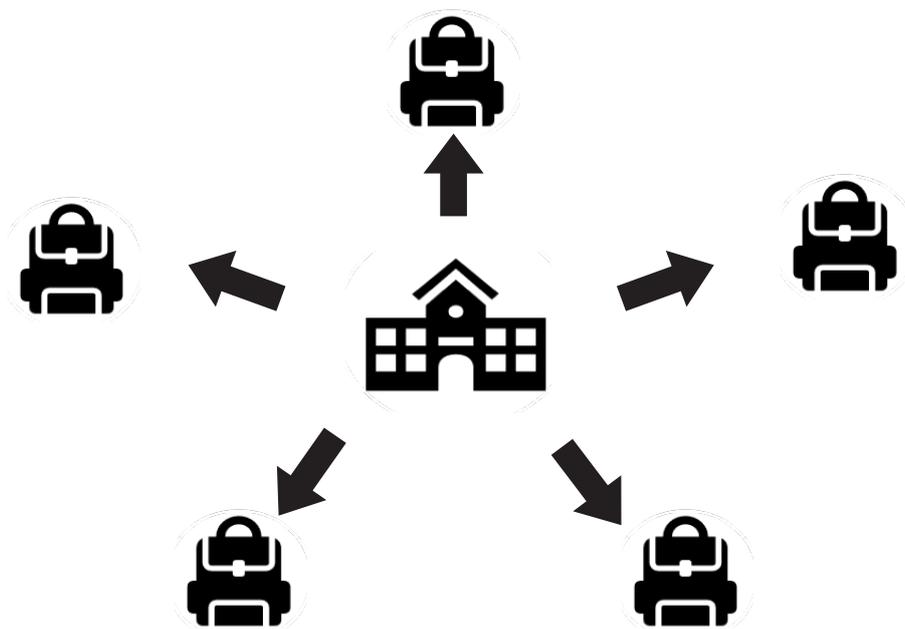
**Table 1: Key outputs of Inspiring Readers programme**

Inspiring Readers activity	Target number	Actual number
Number of children reached	250,000	290,883
Number of librarians trained	104	113
Number of teachers trained	930	880
Number of hub libraries	52	53
Number of schools	310	297
Number of UK books donated	356,500	372,473
Number of local books purchased	31,000	50,237

**Key outcome:** All primary school children enjoy increased access to reading and learning materials, and receive increased support from their teachers, who are better able to promote reading. Children grow in their love of reading and their confidence in learning. Teachers and librarians collaborate to support children's learning.

# Programme description

The programme was designed to facilitate and encourage reading in schools. At the heart of Inspiring Readers is the 'hub and spoke' model that brokered the cooperation and, in most cases, new relationships between librarians, head teachers and teachers – equipping the librarians to train the head teachers and teachers through a cascade training approach.



## The books

Each of the 25 schools participating in *Inspiring Readers* received approximately 1,150 new, high-quality English books (800 phonics books in class sets for early years classes and lower primary school in two boxes, and a third box of 350 books for upper primary learners) and approximately 100–200 locally purchased books. The schools also received more reading promotion aids, such as posters and four dictionaries per school (two for lower primary and two for upper primary). Schools were



Book boxes in Cameroon

also provided with a lockable book cupboard to safely store the books in, and two book boxes to transport the books around the school.

The locally purchased books were acquired by providing a grant to the partner. This partner discussed which books the schools would benefit most from, as well as what was available. These could be local language books, or books that are produced locally with relevant content but written in English or French. Incorporating local books motivated children to read and ensured support from schools. There was a lot of interest and support by the schools for the local books because some procured books were curriculum set books that the schools needed.

The librarians at the *Children's Corners* hub libraries were trained in managing the libraries and designing a training programme to help the schools to get the most from their new materials. Various methods of usage were presented. The phonics books were in class sets and could be used as resources to teach low ability/ lower primary learners how to read in English, as well as books and library materials to read for leisure during free time, and/or books to use as reference materials when teaching specific subjects. The specific usage of the books was at the discretion of the head teacher and teachers from each school, since certain methods of usage suited each school differently according to their context. The books could also be used in classrooms as reference materials for teachers and made available for leisure reading.

**Measuring impact:** One of the ambitions of the programme design was to enable Book Aid International to report on changes that regular reading can contribute to, namely increased vocabulary and increased confidence of children. With a more extensive monitoring and evaluation process incorporated, it enabled a deeper level of impact to be measured among all stakeholders: librarians, head teachers, teachers and learners.



*Donated books and cupboard in Miringato Primary School, Kenya*

# Programme impact

## 250,000 children reading

*Inspiring Readers* set out to reach 250,000 children in seven countries. A total of 290,883 children have been reached, with the programme having a sustainable impact not only on the children but also on the teachers and wider school communities. A total of 372,473 UK books and 50,237 locally purchased books were provided to 297 schools. Children reported benefiting from the programme in several ways:

Children's interest in reading increased as a result of book-rich schools: There were few books in schools prior to the programme – learners were mostly interacting with curriculum materials. *Inspiring Readers* brought in a variety of supplementary and story books, making learners excited about visiting the school library and increasing interaction with reading materials, leading to the growth of a reading culture in schools.



*Learners reading at Quarry Community Primary School, Sierra Leone*

*"Even sometimes in classes when it's time for reading they urge you. They say Mr Bangura it's time for reading now. They are so happy. They have the urge to read for themselves."*

**- Mohamed S Njai, Ansarul Islamic Primary School, Bo, Sierra Leone**

Children's interaction with relevant, good-quality books vastly increased during the project, as teachers had the resources, skills, knowledge and motivation needed to set up lending systems and library lessons, and to enrich curriculum lessons using books. This increased interaction with books led to improvements in children's learning and reading habits. Children read more regularly and enjoyed reading more, thereby increasing in confidence and improving reading skills, wider literacy skills and cross-curricula learning.

*"We felt very happy when we first saw the books. There was no library in the school before. We only had textbooks and no storybooks. We are now able to read many interesting stories."*

**- Madalisto, Learner, 12 years old, Chisitu Primary School, Mulanje, Malawi**

**Children developed a positive attitude towards books and are enjoying reading:**

Children said that they enjoyed reading because they gained new knowledge, learned English vocabulary, read interesting and funny stories, drew pictures from the books and learned moral lessons such as respecting others and being kind. Reading books was also a source of entertainment for learners. Some learners indicated that they felt happy, peaceful, informed and did not display negative behaviours when they spent time reading library books.



*Learners in Ingubo 1 Primary School, Zimbabwe reading the donated books*

*"The books entertain me because they are fun to read. Stories are exciting. The stories occupy our minds. The books make me relax. When I feel bored and lonely, I read and feel nice."*

**- Anna Gwambana, Learner, Grade 6, Nketa Primary school, Zimbabwe**

*"Reading makes us feel happy. Sometimes when I read my book at home, when I borrow a book from the library, my sister helps me know the words that I don't know how to pronounce."*

**- Fatmata, Learner, 11 years old, Practising Primary School, Makeni, Serra Leone**

This shows that accessibility to books in school improved the reading culture among learners. Learners enjoyed reading the library books and began demanding the books to read.



*Learners at Mulanje Lea Primary School, Malawi enjoying the books*

*"When the school has a library, it motivates children to read and develop the foundation of culture of reading."*

**- Rubuga Ishmael, Head Teacher, Junction Primary School, Kabale, Uganda**

**Children's English language skills have improved:** Regular reading of books led to improved spoken and written English language among learners. Some children indicated that they desired to learn English so that they could speak with people from other countries and teach other children, including their siblings, how to read in English.

*"I can speak English with other people from other countries who do not know Chichewa. Before I started reading the books, I could not speak English because I did not know many words."*

**- Rachael, Learner, Mulanje CCAP Mission, Mulanje, Malawi**

*"English is the mother of all education. One must know English to learn all the subjects. All jobs also require one to know English. It is important to read the English books."*

**- Abdul, Learner, Class 6, Mangapwani Primary School, Zanzibar**

**Reading improved children's self-esteem and confidence:** Reading the books greatly boosted learners' self-esteem and confidence.

*"I know how to read English. It makes us feel good about ourselves. If you know your spellings and you know how to read it gives us high self-esteem."*

**- Elshaddai, Learner, 10 years old, Chiwoko Primary School, Lilongwe, Malawi**

*"I could not stand before others and talk but now I can stand confidently at the parade and talk and advise other pupils."*



*Learner reading in front of her class at Mahuduthi Primary School, Zanzibar*

**- Learner, St Gonzaga Primary School, Jinja, Uganda**

**Library books are guiding children to their future:** The books acted as a source of inspiration for learners and opened their minds to new possibilities.

*"I learn what I will be in future through books."*

**- Learner, Busamaga Primary School, Mbale, Uganda**

This was possible due to the increased book stock and library facilities in schools, as well as increased opportunities for reading provided by teachers, both at school and home, through book-lending programmes.

## Impact on teachers

*Inspiring Readers* set out to reach 930 teachers (310 head teachers and 620 teachers) in seven countries. A total of 880 headteachers and teachers were trained. Fewer teachers were reached than anticipated due to the inclusion of a project tranche in Kibera, Kenya, that only has one hub library – therefore, a maximum of 12 schools rather than 25 could be reached. The impacts were reported as:

### **Project schools are book rich enhancing teaching experience in schools:**

The increased variety of supplementary and story books in schools enabled teachers to have resources for teaching. After the training, teachers found the UK books to be relevant and useful for both themselves and learners. Left:

*“The project has helped us to know how to use the materials to teach reading. We even use the materials to teach other subjects, i.e. maths, science, and others.”*

**- Elizabeth Kumba Sesay, Teacher, Roman Catholic primary school, Segbweme, Sierra Leone**

The programme improved teachers' confidence in their teaching skills through access to a variety of books for reference and use with learners.

*“I am more confident when armed with books. I am able to provide a wide range of examples when teaching. I feel more knowledgeable when teaching.”*

**- Makumba, Teacher, Buluzi Primary school, Area 36, Malawi**

**Enhanced teaching aids and methods:** Many teachers said that their teaching methods had been enhanced since the programme began because they had more teaching resources. Before the books were received, teachers across all seven countries spent a lot of time creating teaching aids by drawing on manila paper or the chalkboard. The presence of the books was a big boost because it gave teachers resources to use with their learners. The books have helped to break the monotony of using one book or, in some cases, no book at all for illustrations and examples in class.



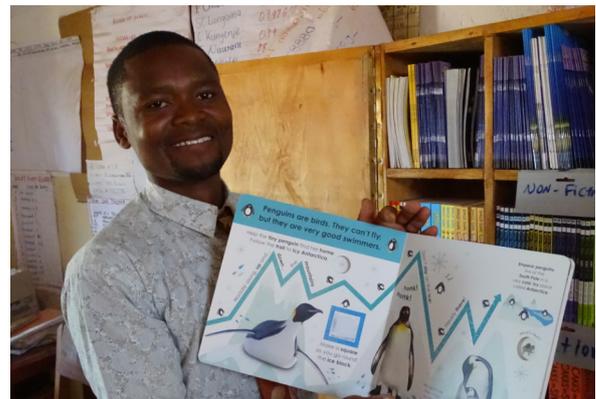
*Teacher at Mangapwani Primary School, Zanzibar using one of the donated books to support a learner*

*"The books provide more explanation on some topics. We are getting additional content from the books. It is easier to explain concepts using the books, e.g. we had a difficult time describing animals like millipedes which we could not draw well. We now have books with different kinds of animals. We don't have to struggle to draw them."*

**- Adam Suleiman Juma, Teacher, Mangapwani Primary School, Zanzibar**

Teachers' views of a school library also transformed, as they developed a clearer understanding of the role of supplementary reading materials and well-organised school libraries in education and learning in general, and as they developed new library management skills.

Some teachers reported that, before the training, they viewed supplementary books as irrelevant and a waste of time for their learners. After the training, however, they appreciated the supplementary and story books because they improved the language skills of learners, which, in turn, affected performance of other subjects positively. Teachers used the project books to exemplify subject content and concepts where they found relevant books. Teachers used the books as reference material and as additional resources in lessons such as science, technology, life skills, geography, history and maths, which may have had a positive effect on children's achievement.



*Teacher librarian at Buluzi 2 Primary School, Malawi with one of the donated books*

*"I used to see fiction and supplementary books as irrelevant and could not encourage pupils to read them. I thought it was an absolute waste of time. We saw the relevance of the books after the training when the children started interacting with them. The children are developing some skills from looking at the pictures and telling stories from the books hence developing their language."*

**- Moses Keverenge, Head Teacher, AIC Kabartonjo Primary, Kabarnet, Kenya**

Teachers also used the books for remedial teaching. Some teachers used books aimed at the early grades to help upper primary learners who needed additional support.

**Teachers are confident, capable and supportive:** The programme contributed to changing the capacity of teachers in supporting reading and learning by increasing the

usage of books in schools. Teacher training unlocked the teachers' potential to develop their school libraries as they gained knowledge, skills and confidence to organise their schools' stores into libraries, making books easily accessible to learners and the teachers. Teachers' library management knowledge and skills prevented wear and tear and loss of books through proper record-keeping and book storage. Teachers were able to give an account of the books' movement in their schools and to minimise losses.



*Teachers taking part in the teacher training in Gwanda, Zimbabwe*

*"Teachers have gained valuable skills on how to organise and run a library. We had some books before the project but we did not know how to organize them. They were scattered and not used. I now have an additional skill. I also use the same skills to lend curriculum books to teachers."*

**- Mariah Mtonga, Teacher, Samson Primary School, Mulanje, Malawi**

Teachers also said that they enjoyed running their school libraries.

*"I feel good and privileged to take the role. It's a good responsibility that doesn't affect other duties."*

**- Caroline Ndungu, Teacher, Muthuaini Primary School, Nyeri, Kenya**

The teacher training yielded broader benefits to teachers too, with one teacher being promoted after presenting the certificate they received in the workshop.

*"I presented the certificate we were given in the library in an interview at Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and I was asked questions in the area of the library matters. I managed to respond to all questions and was promoted. I can therefore say that as an individual I have gained from the training economically because my pay has improved due to the promotion."*

**- Kilonzo Gichana, Teacher, Kari Deb Primary School, Kasia**

**Improved reading culture among teachers:** An unforeseen project outcome was that some teachers developed a culture of reading and started reading more regularly themselves. Some teachers registered as individual members of the hub libraries to access more books and spent time reading the donated books in their schools.

*"Our teachers also come to the library to read books. I have learned a lot from this book about famous people like Nelson Mandela."*

**- Titus Momoh Foday, Head Teacher, Kailahun District Education Committee Primary School, Segbwema, Sierra Leone**

*"I have been teaching for 30 years. Because of this project I have started reading again. I like reading storytelling books."*

**- Yeverta Kluwa, Deputy Head Teacher, Balaka Primary School, Balaka, Malawi**

# Impact on schools

A key outcome of the programme was to enable learners to read books during the schools' library lessons. The following benefits were reported across school communities:

**Introduction of library lesson:** The library lesson in school timetables was introduced as a new initiative in most schools. Where schools previously had a library timetable, they were now making better use of it thanks to the new resources and the support of the head teachers. This increased opportunities for learners to interact with the books. The donated books encouraged teachers to actively implement library lessons.

*"I used to struggle to get story books and was looking for newspapers. Nowadays there are resources and I am very happy that I don't have to struggle with the library lesson."*

**- Tabitha Mwenda, Teacher, OMC primary, Rumuruti, Kenya**

Library lesson activities included a mixture of silent reading, group reading and a variety of reading activities led by the teacher.

## **Improved confidence levels and participation of learners in class:**

Teachers found that reading supplementary books increased learners' motivation, confidence and participation in class. Learners gained the ability to communicate well in English and local languages.

They engaged the teachers more

in class and asked questions based on the books they had read. They retold stories confidently with improved grammar. Teachers noted improvements in the wider literacy skills of learners, as well as reading skills. They particularly highlighted progress made in speaking, pronunciation, spelling, narration, storytelling and writing.



*Learner reading in class at Miringato Primary School, Kenya*

*"Before, we used to fear and shiver when teachers asked us to read in front of the class. Nowadays everyone can read easily and we no longer fear."*

**- Learner, Mbale Police Wanyera Primary School, Mbale, Uganda**

*"Now learners are more active than before. They are able to participate. Because they are now used to reading books and they are able to understand and ask questions. They are effectively involved in the lesson."*

**- Sheldrick Banda, Teacher, Sosola Primary School, Balaka, Malawi**

Learners said that when they read books, they were able to answer teachers' questions, which helped with their confidence. Some also said that the books helped them with spelling, writing letters, composition, drama, comprehension, narrating stories, reciting poems and songs, and pronunciation.

*"I used to see stars when watching news (could not understand!). I can now hear news well without problems. I was able to convince pupils to give me votes to be the head boy because I can now communicate well in English. At the beginning, I was given two lower primary books by Teacher Jane and I saw that they were so good. And from then on I have never stopped reading."*

**- Joseph Kagwa, Class 7, Head Boy, Getembe Primary School, Kisii, Kenya**

**Positive link between reading supplementary books and academic performance:**

The availability of supplementary and fiction books in schools provided teachers and learners with much-needed resources for instructions and learning. This motivated both teachers and learners and consequently improved academic performance across schools.

*"All other subjects have improved since English has improved. English is the mother of all subjects. It is the bedrock of everything that happened in school."*

**- Sheila Yegon, Deputy Head and English teacher, Visa Oshwal Primary School, Kabarnet, Kenya**

**Reading for leisure contributed to improved behaviour in schools:** Teachers reported that cases of negative behaviour reduced because learners were busy reading during their free time, including break times. Learners made good use of their free time and noise levels reduced in schools.

*"We have noticed that there is less mischief among pupils. The level of discipline has improved. Non-readers are now interested in reading. Naughty children now like holding books for themselves."*

**- Mrs Nyati, Head Teacher, Mthombowesizwe Primary School, Zimbabwe**

*"I give pupils the library books when their class teachers are not present. The books calm them down and they don't get into mischief."*

**- Asha Abdalla, Head Teacher, Mizingani Primary school, Zanzibar**

**Library books are useful for supporting learners who need additional support:** The books were used to improve reading across the school and especially with those learners in upper classes who needed additional support with their reading.

*"The pupils are catching up and progressing well. Non-readers are now reading. I used the books to help 22 non-readers in grade 7 and they improved greatly."*

**- Mrs Nyati, Head Teacher, Mthombowesizwe Primary School, Zimbabwe**

*"I used the simple books to conduct individual coaching for a weak learner who could not write in English. I spoke to him and the parent. I told the parent that I would be giving him books while the parent ensured that he reads and brings them back to school. The boy scored an A in science after using the books for two months."*

**- Beatrice Murage, Head Teacher, Melwa Primary School, Kenya**

**Vibrant school libraries raise the profile of the school in the community:** The learning resources provided improved the image and profile of the schools as they became more visible and recognised in their communities. More parents enrolled their children in the project schools with libraries. The schools also became centres for learning for other schools.

*"The neighbouring schools were admiring us because pupils were talking about the books in the community. The books put us on the map in the community."*

**- Jones Store, Head Teacher, Lauderdale Primary School, Mulanje, Malawi**



*Teacher at CCAP 2 Primary School, Malawi with a poster made to promote reading*

*"We feel proud when other teachers come all the way to benchmark with us as we are now a role model. Three schools have visited and two of them have since registered with the hub library."*

**- Purity Wanjiru Mwangi, Deputy Head Teacher, Gaikundo Primary School, Nyeri, Kenya**

*"Some parents are even telling their children not to go to the private school, but to come here, because we came second in the leaving exams."*

**- Mohamed M Bangura, Teacher, Ansarul Islamic Primary School, New London, Bo, Sierra Leone**

**Increased recognition and value of libraries:** As a result of the programme, two head teachers in Kenya and one head teacher in Malawi reported that the school library was such an important resource that it should be prioritised further. They, therefore, decided to hire full-time librarians. This increased the amount of access learners had to the books during non-classroom hours. In addition, some head teachers had renewed interest and respect for hub libraries and visited them regularly.

**Improved schools' resourcing:** Providing necessary tools for implementation – cupboards for book storage, boxes and registers – was critical. Schools had very poor infrastructure and no budget for stationery. The cupboard libraries were kept either in the school library, a store, a classroom, the staffroom or the deputy head teacher's office. Others went a step further and created space for a library building. The head teacher of Nyamachaki Primary School in Nyeri, Kenya, renovated an old toilet block into a library. All the different efforts initiated by the head teachers created opportunities for children to access the books.

**Incorporating locally purchased storybooks elicited interest and support from schools:** Incorporating local books motivated children to read and ensured support from schools. This elicited a lot of interest and support by the schools, because some of the procured books were set books that they needed. Head teachers made efforts to increase the library book collection by mobilising local resources. For instance, the head teacher of Mahuduthi Primary School in Zanzibar approached well-wishers from different Islamic groups to donate Islamic and Kiswahili books. The head teacher of Insukamini Primary School in Zimbabwe talked to parents to help create positive reading spaces in the compound, which included tents and a budget for library books.

**Schools benefited from regular outreach from local librarians:** The librarians' support visits were very useful in helping schools to develop their libraries. Regular follow-up visits by the hub librarians helped them to stay on track and provided much-needed technical support, which boosted the confidence of the teachers in establishing and running their school libraries.

*"We have been so supported. Maybe without them [hub librarians] we would not have transformed this room to this level. They have been supporting us in different ways, strategically, to advise us, direct us, support us and just to say thank you to us."*

**- Duncan Tembo, Head Teacher, Katoto Primary, Mzuzu, Malawi**

*"Her [the local librarian] visits have been of great help to us – advising and directing us on how to carry out reading activities."*

**- Head Teacher, PNEU school, Cameroon**

## Impact on librarians and hub libraries

In total, 113 hub librarians were trained to undertake outreach programmes in schools. Each hub reached five schools and worked closely with teachers to establish school libraries and promote reading in the schools.

### **Training of Trainers (ToT) helped to develop hub librarians' knowledge, skills and confidence:**

The training component increased librarians' overall knowledge, skills and confidence to implement the project. They said that they had built confidence in facilitating training and helping teachers to establish school libraries and promote reading.

*"We used the knowledge from the ToT to train the teachers in the selected schools and it helped us a lot. As a national librarian, we also apply it to other schools because we train other teacher librarians."*

**- Joyce Ntchafu, Outreach Coordinator and Hub Librarian, Lilongwe, MNLS, Malawi**

Librarians felt better equipped to train teachers, monitor activity and serve children in the schools. Librarians reported that they were more confident in delivering training.



*Librarians in Uganda taking part in the Training of Trainers workshop*

*"I didn't know how to train using PowerPoint. I am now an expert and can make my presentations. I understand things better and I can formulate questionnaires. The training gave me more confidence. I also learnt better methods of conducting training."*

**- Agnes Karegi, Librarian, Rumuruti Library, Kenya**

Librarians also reported that they had a better understanding of the link between the public libraries and schools after taking part in the project.

*"The ToT training gave me an opportunity to be more hands on. I now understand the link between public libraries and schools. It has improved interaction with pupils and teachers."*

**- Sarah Ogembo, Hub Librarian, Kisii, Kenya**



*Librarians in Kenya taking part in the Training of Trainers workshop*

The ToT training developed librarians' positive attitude, self-esteem and confidence. Their confidence increased as they became seen as important members of the community. Librarians felt more respected by teachers, other professionals and community members in their regions, which motivated them in their work. Librarians became bolder and more confident in delivering training for teachers and implementing the project in general. They were able to recognise their value and contribution in promoting reading in schools as well as hub libraries.

*"Before, the teachers did not know that librarians knew many things in the area of teaching. After training the teachers and sharing the books with them, teachers have developed respect for us."*

**- Alex, Kabale Hub Librarian, Kabale, Uganda**

*"The training helped me to handle adults who are teachers already. It was initially not easy training teachers. The skills from ToT helped me to gain courage to talk before teachers and head teachers. The training gave us hints to train without fear and to deliver."*

**- Felix Chilombo, Librarian, Mbabzi Community Library, Malawi**

**Library outreach programmes were revitalised:** The project helped hub libraries rejuvenate their outreach programmes improving the relationship with project schools and more generally with other schools in their regions. Librarians reported that teachers are now more receptive to library initiatives. There were many instances where the teachers and head teachers were willing to offer support for the outreach work by providing their cars to transport librarians to their schools and offering them lunch.

*"The outreach programme has changed since we were able to reach far flung schools which we were not able to reach previously. Some of the schools were not aware of existence of libraries and due to this programme, they were able to know the importance of libraries and we have continued to get in touch with the schools."*

**- Susan Makumi, Librarian, Rumuruti Library, Kenya**

**Public library services have been marketed:** Libraries and librarians became more visible in communities, and peoples' perceptions changed positively due to improved library outreach services.

*"Some schools didn't know the library existed here, but with the book donation from Book Aid International, they know about the National Library Service in Balaka. We have registered many members. The project has helped us to market our services."*

**- Drinnie Maole, Main Librarian, Balaka Library, Malawi**

*"Inspiring Readers has opened doors for us. Teachers from the Inspiring Readers project are our ambassadors in many other forums. The project inspired more children to visit the library. I feared that children will not come to the library because they have books in school, but the exact opposite has happened."*

**- Forget Nyati, Librarian, Pumula Library, Zimbabwe**

*Inspiring Readers addresses the UN's **Sustainable Development Goal 4**: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunity for all, and the programme empowered librarians to feel that they were contributing to the goals.*

*"With Book Aid International's support we have been able to play a role in the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular goals 4 and 5."*

**- Antonetta Madziva, Senior Librarian, Bulawayo City Council, Zimbabwe**

# Impact on communities

**Education officials' support:** The programme attracted the attention of education officials in various countries.

*"This programme is so good. I urge my fellow teachers to hold it and do not overthrow it, so that our children can continue to benefit from these books. I also congratulate the staff of the Zanzibar Library Service and Book Aid International for supporting the government's efforts to improve the quality of education in the country."*

**- Mr Moh'd Nassor Salim, Education Officer In Charge, Pemba, Zanzibar**

**Vibrant school libraries benefited the wider community:** Most remote and marginalised regions in Africa do not have public or community libraries. However, primary schools are well spread all over countries and are closer to the people. *Inspiring Readers* has shown that schools can open up their libraries to the wider community, allowing community members to borrow books for reading. For instance, at Murkutwo Primary School in Lagam, Kenya, adult learners and the teachers used the school library for learning purposes. This shows that schools in remote regions can open up their libraries to the local community. This helped to promote a reading culture in both the school and wider community.



*Book borrowing system in place at Lingadzi Primary School, Malawi*

In Zanzibar, parents, out-of-school teenagers and elders borrowed the locally purchased Kiswahili books to read for leisure and entertainment.

*"Some of the parents borrow the books to read to their children at home."*

**- Sichana Foum, Director, Zanzibar Library Service, Zanzibar**

Teachers at Mtuhaliwa Primary School in Zanzibar said that children in the community who were no longer attending school became curious and eager when they saw learners carrying books to read at home. They were also allowed to borrow books from the library even though they were not registered in the schools.

The 'adult learners unit' in Gaikundo Primary School, Kenya, runs daily sessions and also benefited from the project. The adult learners read simple books from the book stock for their early literacy lessons, leading to significant improvement in language skills acquisition.

In Muringato Primary School in Nyeri, Kenya, parents are allowed to borrow books from the school library.

*"I called a child and asked for a book she had borrowed and she told me her father was still reading it."*

**- Lucy Kaburu, Muringato Primary School, Nyeri, Kenya**

**Community members saved funds:** Most parents in the project schools were low-income earners, others resided in informal settlements, while others were small-scale subsistence farmers who could not afford to buy books for their children. The project schools had very few story books in their stock and almost no supplementary books. Often, the schools would request parents buy books for their children to facilitate learning. *Inspiring Readers*, therefore, provided the most-needed supplementary and story books, saving parents funds that they could put towards the needs of their families.

**The community was supportive of the programme activities:** Parents and community members across the countries were very positive about the *Inspiring Readers'* activities. In some cases, they helped to raise funds to build library rooms, and acquire shelving and additional locally purchased books.

*"The community now like the library. They know the children come to read and have books. The community like the books too."*

**- Steven Simon, Chirimba LEA school, Blantyre, Malawi**

**Communities recognise the value of hub libraries:** Libraries and librarians became more visible, and perceptions changed in the communities due to improved outreach services. Schools in Zanzibar have a programme in which learners visit key sights in town, including museums, parliament buildings and cathedrals – with some schools now committed to including the hub libraries in the list of places to visit. This will help

learners gain a deeper understanding of how a library operates, where they otherwise might be unable to visit the library due to the long travelling distances required.

## Use of books during Covid-19 lockdowns

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Book Aid International provided a grant for all ongoing projects to support partners acquire basic protection items, include handwashing stations and soap, to keep children safe in the school libraries. Teachers reported that during the lockdown children were able to borrow books for use at home across most of the project schools. The time away from school was used to ensure that children focused on story books for their own personal growth. A teacher from Ngangarithi Primary School in Kenya lent out the project books from the local church where children in the community were able to borrow books during the lockdown period.



*Learners at Seventh Day Adventist Primary School, Sierra Leone, using a handwashing station provided by Book Aid International*

*"The project provided the information materials that have kept the pupils busy in their homes while reading when they borrow from school. This has helped restrict children's movements from one home to another where they can acquire the Covid-19 virus."*

**- Nakafeero Josephine, Maseka Public Library, Uganda**

# Challenges

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The main challenges experienced during project implementation were delays caused by insecurity in some locations and the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Given unforeseen instability with the political situation in Cameroon, it was not possible for the project to continue within planned timelines in all library hubs. Training of librarians and teachers was carried out successfully, and books and other project items were delivered in schools. However, due to insecurity in the country, children did not fully utilise the books as planned because the schools were largely closed in 2016 and 2017.

Cases of insecurity were also noted in Kenya in Lagam, Elgeyo Marakwet, where inter-clan clashes posed potential threats during the teachers' training in Lagam library and librarians' visits to schools. Librarians were not able to visit two schools as scheduled because fighting was intense.

Delays were also experienced due to the Covid-19 pandemic in Uganda and Zimbabwe where the programme was initiated in 2019. The project timelines had to be reviewed due to Covid-19-related lockdowns, leading to the closure of schools and libraries.

# Lessons learnt

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There were a number of lessons that were learnt from the programme implementation, including:

- 1. Training changes attitudes of librarians, head teachers and teachers:** The training of librarians and having them train teachers has led to a change in perception in the value of librarianship by head teachers and teachers, raising librarian self-esteem and the value of books and reading.
- 2. Head teacher involvement is necessary for effective project implementation in schools:** It is important to always include head teachers when seeking to incorporate reading into the school timetable. They lead the use of the books and encourage/support the teachers.
- 3. Brokering good relationships between librarians and teachers helps them to go the extra mile to support each other:** While we had a minimum expectation of support given by librarian to teacher, when a good relationship is brokered, they often visit each other more and develop a deeper, supportive relationship of their own volition. Brokering good relationships can see stakeholders going the extra mile with each other. Bringing different professions with the same goal together in a project helps both deliver improved support to learners.
- 4. Parental support is key to project sustainability:** It is important to work closely with parents to solicit their support for school libraries as well as in helping their children read at home. Both librarians and teachers should seek parents' support through involvement in key project activities, perhaps including parent representatives in project meetings.

# Conclusion

*“Communities realised the importance of championing reading and starting libraries.”*

**- Sarah Ogembo, Librarian, Kenya National Library Service, Kenya**

This report clearly illustrates that the objectives of the programme have been met. There is now an improved attitude towards reading in the project schools and the culture of reading has been developing among learners and the wider school communities. Learners are enthusiastic and enjoy reading both the locally purchased and UK-donated books. This has led to improved reading levels and skills, evident in written and spoken English in the schools. Learners are more confident because they are able to express themselves, and teachers are able to deliver their lessons well because learners' participation is high and they better understand the concepts that are taught.

Teachers have a better understanding of how to run school libraries and how to motivate learners to read. They have identified the place of supplementary books in learning. Improved examination performance in the schools motivates the teachers to sustain the *Inspiring Readers* initiative through developing their school libraries.

Most project schools now have well-organised, vibrant libraries with relevant books. This has raised the profile and reputation of the schools in their communities. More parents want to enrol their children in the project schools, and teachers from other schools have enquired about the programme. Parents are happy that their children can access a variety of storybooks within the school. Before the project, most schools had old, outdated course books and few readers.

Hub libraries have been marketed widely through the programme. Community members are showing more interest in their local libraries and even younger children have the confidence to talk to librarians, who are now seen to be more approachable.

The training was received well and has helped to increase the confidence of teachers in promoting reading and running the school libraries. Librarians, on the other hand, gained the confidence to train teachers and oversee implementing the project in school through monitoring visits. Librarians and participating schools have formed strong relationships, where the schools see the librarians as a source of expertise and support that they are now able to call on. The librarians underpinned the project by providing an invaluable source of encouragement and support for schools to get their

libraries up and running well and, therefore, there is strong potential for these school/library relationships to continue and be long-lasting.

## The future of *Inspiring Readers*

From evaluation of the programme a number of recommendations for future *Inspiring Readers* projects can be made:

- **Provision of more locally published books:** Every school received 100–200 locally purchased books. These have proved to be very popular with the learners, and schools have requested more local books. Schools and libraries could seek donations from local publishers or fundraise from parent donations to grow the library.
- **Training more teachers:** Frequent teacher transfers creates gaps, thus the need to train the head teacher and more than two teachers in each school. With the provided training modules and resources, head teachers and the trained teachers should orientate more teachers in schools to ensure the programme runs even when some teachers transfer to other schools. This could be done through librarian outreach at the school or in-school training by previously trained and experienced teachers of the programme.
- **ToT and teacher training workshop timings:** Both librarians and teachers often fed back that the training workshops contained too much information for the time allocated, saying that it was difficult for them to take on board all of the information. It would be beneficial, then, for training times to be extended.
- **Facilitation for librarian visits to schools:** One of the most effective ways of ensuring success of the school libraries is regular follow-up visits. Teachers are busy with teaching duties and need to be supported and monitored. This would require more visits by the librarians and potentially more funds for transport and communication. Another way is by involving Ministry of Education officials in the trainings so that they can monitor use of the books when they visit schools.
- **Plan for school-wide impact:** Having head teachers and trained teachers cascade the training they received to the whole school teaching staff would help to get all teachers on board and all children in the school community benefiting from the books. A module could be included in the training about this for future workshops. Additionally, materials could be provided for head teachers to run their own training

or library orientation with the manuals. We could also include an expectation that head teachers will hold a staff meeting or training session at their schools.

- **Digital element:** A potential digital element could act as a bolt-on where applicable to provide e-readers to hub libraries that would be stored there for school teachers and learners to use during their visit. This could be added to certain cycles and countries depending on funding.

# With thanks



It's with great pleasure that we are able to look back on the Inspiring Readers programme and see all that it has achieved. We see in our work every day that books and reading offer people the opportunity to shape their own futures and this programme has allowed us to see the difference books and library development can make.

*But we cannot do our work alone. We rely on not only the dedicated support of our library partners in the countries we work in, who are instrumental in helping to provide sustainable change to the lives of many, but also the UK publishers who kindly donate brand new books to support our work, and of course the generous funders, without whom we simply wouldn't have the means to reach such a large number of schools around the world with the Inspiring Readers programme. Thank you all for your support and for making this work possible.*

**- Samantha Thomas-Chuula, Head of Programmes**

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Educational Information Services International (EISERVI)

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Kenya National Library Service

### Malawi

Malawi National Library Service

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### Uganda

National Library of Uganda

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