

Books change lives



BookLinks

Sharing information across libraries
in Africa and beyond



Book Aid
International

June 2022 / Issue 34

Welcome



Welcome to the first edition of Booklinks for 2022.

We have some announcements about Book Aid International that we are pleased to share with you.

We are deeply honoured to inform you that Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall is our new Patron. Her Royal Highness is well known for her personal love of reading, for championing the importance of books and for supporting causes promoting reading and literacy for all. We look forward to working with Her Royal Highness to bring the power of books and pleasure of reading to people around the world.

We are also pleased to welcome Dr Alice Prochaska as our new Chair. Dr Prochaska has led some of the world's most important libraries and archives including Yale University Library and has been actively involved with the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). Dr. Prochaska takes over from Lord Paul Boateng, who is continuing his involvement with Book Aid International as Vice Patron.

We hope that during 2022 we can replicate the great successes achieved in 2021. Last year we were once again able to ship over one million books to our growing network of 150 partners. We were able to achieve this amazing target with the continued, strong support of our publishing partners, the generosity of our donors and the dedication and innovation of our library and NGO partners. Together our partners received, sorted and distributed the books to 3,335 different libraries, schools, higher education institutions, prisons and refugee settings, ensuring that millions of readers have access to high quality books for reading and learning.

This year sees the launch of our new strategy "*The Power of Books*". The strategy focuses on four key goals: equity, engagement, partnership and advocacy. We will work with you, our library and NGO partners to ensure that our books and projects continue to reach the most disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

We look forward to sharing the inspirational stories of how the power of books is being harnessed to create better futures for readers and communities in future editions of Booklinks.

Best regards,

Alison Tweed
Chief Executive

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.

Photo credits:

Page 5 Clockwise

© Book Aid International/Natalija Gormalova Video and Photography

© Book Aid International/SolarAid/Chris Gagnon

© African Parks

© Ghana Library Authority

Page 6

© Book Aid International/SolarAid/Chris Gagnon

Page 7

©BookAidInternational/JasonJMulikita

Inside this issue

News	3
A message from our new Chair	4
Strategy overview	5
Reading when the sun goes down	6
Reading around the Reserve	7
Supporting reading at home	8
Q&A with the warehouse team	10

News



New Patron

We are deeply honoured to announce that Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall is our new patron. Her Royal Highness is well known for her personal love of reading, for championing the importance of books and for supporting causes promoting reading and literacy for all. Her Royal Highness first saw the impact of Book Aid International's work on a visit to The Gambia in 2018, where she opened a new library at St. Joseph's School in Banjul that was supported by the charity.

New Chair of the Board

We are thrilled to introduce Dr Alice Prochaska as our new Board Chair. Dr Prochaska takes over from Lord Paul Boateng, who is continuing his involvement with Book Aid International as Vice Patron.



Dr Alice Prochaska
Chair, Book Aid International

Dr Alice Prochaska has led some of the world's most important libraries and archives. She worked at the UK National Archives and as Director of Special Collections at the British Library and led one of the largest research libraries in the world as University Librarian at Yale. She has also served as a board member of the Bodleian Library and Yale University Press.

As Chair of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Standing Committee of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), Dr Prochaska joined the fight against the destruction of libraries in areas of conflict. She has a special interest in the preservation of international heritage collections and has published, curated exhibitions and broadcast on topics dealing with archives and libraries.

Dr Prochaska holds the degrees of MA and Doctor of Philosophy in Modern History from the University of Oxford, and she served as Principal of Somerville College Oxford 2010 to 2017. Her other interests include the history of women's education and diversity in universities, and in her spare time she volunteers with homeless and refugee charities.

New Vice Patron

Lord Paul Boateng, who served as Chair of the Board of Book Aid International from 2014-2021, will still be involved with our work in his new role as Vice Patron. The Rt Hon, the Lord Paul Boateng, PC DL was born in London but spent much of his childhood in Ghana, West Africa. A civil liberties lawyer, he was one of the UK's first Black MPs (1987-2005) and became the first Black Cabinet Minister (2002-2005) serving as Chief Secretary to the Treasury until he left Parliament to become the UK's High Commissioner to South Africa (2005-2009). Ennobled in 2010, he serves on numerous commercial and philanthropic boards with a focus on Africa, youth, health and economic development. He is Chancellor of the University of Greenwich, and a Vice President of the London Library.



The Rt Hon The Lord Boateng
PC DL, Chair, Book Aid International
Vice Patron, Book Aid International

A message from our new Chair



Dr Alice Prochaska
Chair, Book Aid International

Around the world, millions of people have never seen or held a new book.

Millions of schoolchildren can learn only by sharing a single threadbare textbook and millions of people have never been encouraged to read, or to escape into the pages of a book.

Yet books give people power. They transform how people see themselves, and see the world around them.

At Book Aid International we share the power of books – and people use that power to create a more equal future. Every year we provide over one million brand new books to thousands of schools, libraries, refugee camps and prisons around the world, creating access to books where the barriers to reading and learning are at their most challenging.

And those challenges have never been greater than they are now.

The pandemic has closed thousands of classrooms in which children were already struggling to learn, with very few books between them. Climate change is impacting communities around the world. Conflict and displacement are putting countless livelihoods and lives at risk.

A book might seem like a small thing in the fight against inequality – but we see every day how a book can spark a transformation. Books light up imaginations and ambitions. They are powerful tools for fighting poverty, improving education, challenging discrimination and building a more equal world for all.

In the places where teachers struggle to encourage children to dream big, where it's hardest to become a doctor, where there has never been a library before – that's where we are determined to put the power of books in people's hands.

This commitment is at the heart of our new strategy.

By focusing on the people who face the greatest barriers to reading and learning we can take the next step towards a world where everyone has access to the books that will enrich, improve and change their lives.

This strategy is that next step, and I invite you to take it with us.

Alice Prochaska

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

Our mission is to give people around the world who lack access to books the opportunity to read for pleasure, study and lifelong learning.

Strategy overview

In our new strategy we have four key goals: equity, engagement, partnership and advocacy.

These four goals all contribute to our vision of a world where everyone has access to the books they need to enrich, improve and change their lives.

To ensure equity of access to books we are focusing our work on the places with the fewest resources and on the most marginalised communities, giving more disadvantaged people opportunities to realise their potential.

To improve access to books and get people engaged with reading we are working with NGO and library partners to support school, community and public libraries: anywhere where people can come together and read. And in everything we do we will advocate and speak out for the power of books to improve and change lives.

To do all this we will invest in our committed people, in our inspirational partners and in our sustainability as a charity, ensuring we are well placed to meet all the challenges the future may hold.



Goal 1: Equity

We will prioritise reaching more of the people who face the greatest barriers to reading and learning.



Goal 2: Engagement

We will work to engage more people with reading, especially in under-served, rural and marginalised communities.



Goal 3: Partnership

We will develop dynamic partnerships with organisations that share our vision of creating more equitable access to books.



Goal 4: Advocacy

We will be advocates for the transformational power of books.

Reading when the sun goes down

Solar Libraries project brings books and lights to Malawi

In Africa, an estimated 600 million people live without electricity, with the most impacted groups being communities living in rural areas. With no access to light after dark, lack of electricity adversely limits what rural communities can achieve. For children it limits time for homework and for teachers it limits time for lesson planning. Both actions lead to children not fulfilling their full potential through education.

Book Aid International have partnered with SolarAid, an international charity providing access to solar lights through their social enterprise, SunnyMoney, to bring the *Solar Libraries* project to primary schools in Malawi. Working alongside the Malawi National Library Service, the project aims to improve primary education by increasing opportunities to read during and after school, through the lending of books and renting of solar lamps together.



Dalitso, from Dedza is now able to read his favourite books for longer

A pilot project was implemented in 17 schools in Malawi's Dedza District between November 2020 and November 2021 reaching over 17,000 learners. Each school received 400 UK donated books and approximately 100 locally purchased books to use in school and to lend alongside solar lamps. Head teachers and teachers were trained in how to establish a regular reading period, how to use the books in curriculum lessons and how to manage lending systems. An independent evaluation found that the project has increased children's access to books with teachers using the books as reference materials for lessons. The evaluation also found that reading at home has provided the learners with opportunities to practice their reading with family members who can support them. Parents noted that the use of the books at home had improved the reading skills of their children.

"My child is now interested in reading and is now very committed to school. She spends more time with the books other than just playing at home."

Parent, Mankhamba Primary School, Malawi

Most schools created a timetable for learners' to access the library for both reading in school and book borrowing.

"The coming of new books has boosted learners' confidence in reading and they truly enjoy reading. As a librarian, I am able to give them appropriate books for their current reading level, not too difficult but challenging enough to encourage growth."

Teacher/Librarian, Chinkhumbe Primary School

The lending of the solar lamps provided learners with more time to read and do their homework at night. Most learners who borrowed lamps said that they used them to read at night and parents saw the value in having both books and lamps in the home.

"My child cannot say 'I can't read because we don't have electricity'. I have actually bought two more lamps to make sure all of my three children have a lamp to be used for reading at night."

Mtakataka Police Primary School

The *Solar Libraries* project is now being rolled out in a further 20 schools this year, with the hope that an ongoing partnership between Book Aid International and SolarAid will allow for many more schools in Malawi and beyond to benefit from the project in the future.



Esnat is ready for reading at home

Reading around the Reserve

Supporting education in communities surrounding protected areas in Zambia

Book Aid International have been working in partnership with African Parks, national library services and local NGOs to bring the *Reading around the Reserve* project to local communities surrounding national parks in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. African Parks is a non-profit conservation organisation that is responsible for the rehabilitation and long-term management of national parks in partnership with governments and local communities. Sustainable livelihoods for communities surrounding national parks are vital to decrease the pressure on natural resources. Through partnering with Book Aid International, African Parks has sought to enhance their support to local schools through improving the quality of education provided. It is hoped that through improved quality education, learners from the communities surrounding the parks will have greater options for livelihoods, careers and jobs that stimulate the local economy and pose no threat to the natural environment.



Reading time at Chiundaponde Primary School

The aim of *Reading around the Reserve* is to create a regular reading activity within schools to promote and support children reading and learning. Each school receives 200 brand new UK donated reading books and a selection of locally purchased books to improve children's reading skills and literacy levels. Teachers are trained in how to organise regular reading in schools by establishing a regular reading period in the school timetable. This leads to improved reading, comprehension and vocabulary skills of learners and the development of a culture of reading in schools.

The pilot project was successfully implemented in 71 primary schools surrounding the Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve in Malawi between November 2020 and November 2021. The reserve has had a difficult past with decades of poaching and hunting turning it into an empty reserve. African Parks assumed management of Nkhotakota in 2015 and over a two-year period the reserve received almost 500 elephants and 2,000 other animals. In addition, innovative solutions for community livelihoods were created, including beekeeping clubs. In total, 41,200 learners benefited from the *Reading around the Reserve* project in Nkhotakota. Through an independent evaluation, it was found that learners attitudes to books and reading improved; reading in schools improved with teachers optimistic of better examination results as a result; learners vocabulary was expanded and teachers used the books as reference materials to support their lessons.

"The books have improved my reading skills."

Parent, Mankhamba Primary School, Malawi

"[The books] have indeed improved the reading culture at the school and [are] used as teaching and learning resources."

Head teacher, Kamizu Primary School, Malawi

"Some learners in Standard 8 were not able to read. After using library books, they started reading."

Teacher, Chikoko Primary School, Malawi

As a result of the successful pilot, the project is now being rolled out in Malawi's Liwonde National Park, Mangochi Forest Reserve and Majete Wildlife Reserve; Zambia's Bangweulu Wetlands and Zimbabwe's Matusadona National Park.

"Learners, teachers and the community borrow [the books] to read."

Head teacher, Chiundaponde Primary School, Zambia

Supporting reading at home

Books to Go project encourages active book borrowing

Shortage of books in primary schools across many African countries negatively affects learning and the reading culture among children. The Covid-19 pandemic saw children out of class due to the global lockdown of schools. The pandemic revealed the value of home learning and the need for extra resources in schools. With schools closed, children who cannot learn at home fall behind. Books are a vital part of schooling and learning but most parents don't have books at home and the vast majority of schools do not have surplus resources to facilitate home learning.

In 2020, Book Aid International launched the *Books to Go* project in partnership with Rainbow Trust Foundation in Ghana, the National Library Service in Kenya, the Library Board in Sierra Leone and the Library Service in Zanzibar. The project was implemented in 20 primary schools across the four countries reaching over 12,700 learners. Each school received 2,000 UK donated books and

approximately 140 locally purchased books, 200 book bags for learners to carry books, shelves for storing the books and plastic boxes to carry books to class and to quarantine them after use. Head teachers and teachers were trained in how to manage the library, how to run a book lending system to ensure effective management and how to support the use of books in schools and at home.

The bright red book bags provided through the project played a key role in motivating children to borrow books. Teachers reported that the bags were the cause of great excitement. Children loved carrying their books in the bags, and learned valuable lessons about protecting the books from damage or loss.

“We used to think that the library can only be found in town. We are so happy that we now have a library in the school.”

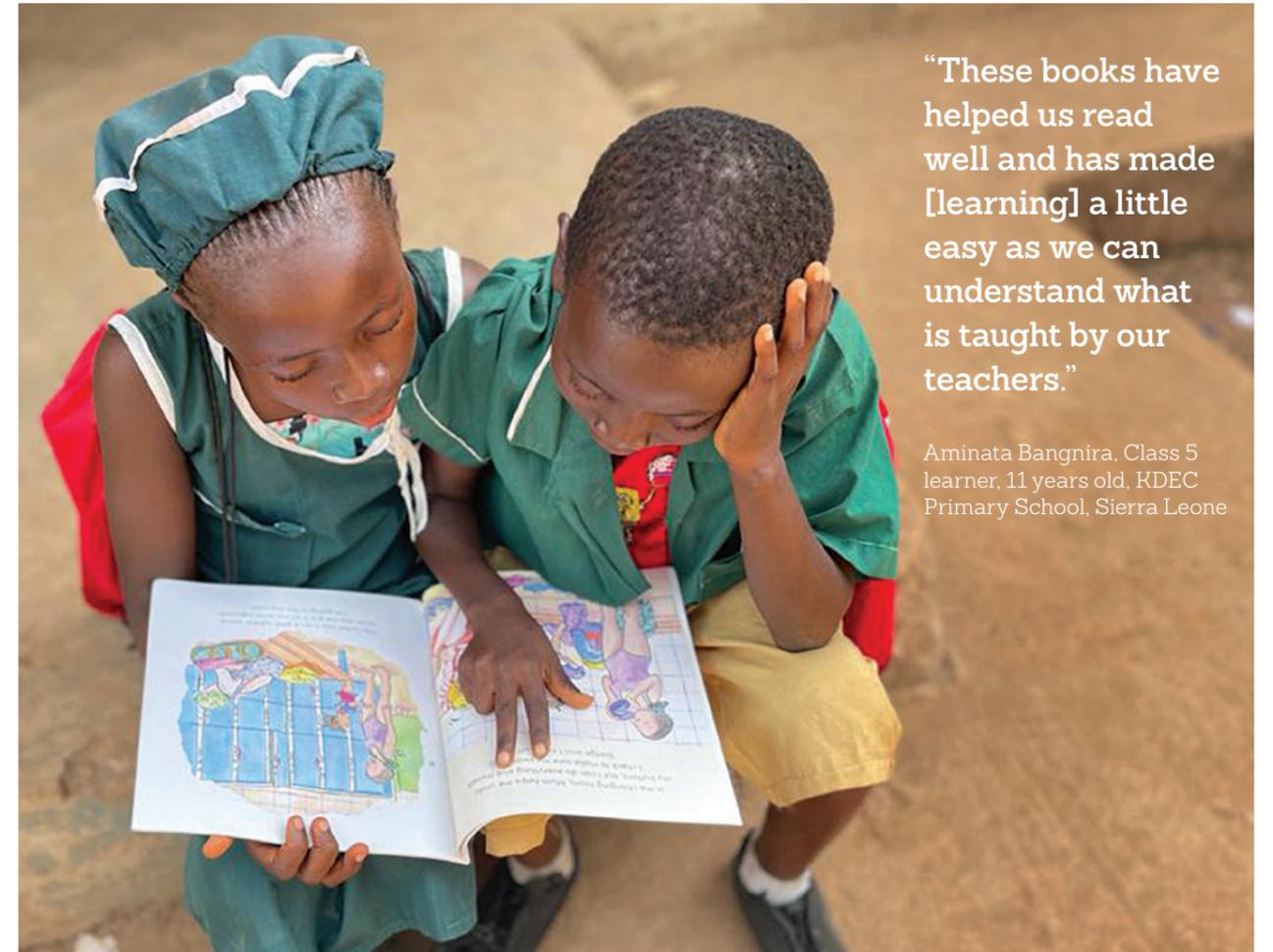
”
Mngindo Subira, Teacher, Kilombero Primary School, Zanzibar

Evaluations conducted by project partners revealed that all the headteachers had set up library spaces in their schools. They either designated a new room as a library or arranged for their bookstores to be cleaned up and organised into effective libraries. In Ghana, Kweiman Presbyterian Primary School converted an empty shipping container into a library.

The evaluations also found that schools had set up effective lending systems which enabled learners to interact with relevant, good quality books and provided them with an added opportunity to read at home with their parents, siblings, neighbours and other relatives. Parents were able to see the benefits of having books in the home and supported their children when books were brought home.



Readers from Community 2 Basic School, Ghana share their books



“These books have helped us read well and has made [learning] a little easy as we can understand what is taught by our teachers.”

Aminata Bangnira, Class 5 learner, 11 years old, KDEC Primary School, Sierra Leone

Reading together, Bamoi-Luma, Sierra Leone

“I normally read in my mother's store for my mother to help me to pronounce difficult words.”

Godfrey Agyiri, learner, age 11, class 3, Kweiman Presbyterian Primary School, Ghana

We really love the books. I am motivated to borrow more, read with my wife and my children as this is what makes my family happy.

David Yego Kirop, parent, Wewo village, Kenya

”

Teachers reported that increased access to and interaction with a variety of books helped learners to be more confident in class and to improve in both written and communication skills.

“Learners had no experience of reading at home before the project. They are starting to learn how to read. Some of the learners who never used to know how to read are improving. English words were a big challenge. They now want to read. They ask teachers to open the library.”

”

Nunu Ramadhan, Teacher, Kilombero Primary School, Zanzibar

Well organised school libraries, stocked with relevant books; learners taking books home and sharing them with their families and friends; teachers visiting homes with books and partners organising reading clinics have all helped to raise the profile of the project schools in their communities.

The *Books to Go* project has shown that when a school has a book resource and a robust book lending system, learners have a greater opportunity to read at home and in school leading to an improved reading culture.

The project also motivated head teachers to embed library use into their weekly timetable allowing learners interaction with books to increase.

“Previously, we had indicated the library lesson on the timetable, but we were not doing anything with it, because we did not have any books that we could use during the library lesson. This has changed because we now have books that we can use during the library lesson.”

”

Diana Muriungi, Teacher, Gakuuni Primary School, Kenya

Selecting, sorting and shipping the books

Q&A with the warehouse team

We speak to three members of the warehouse team who work to ensure the books we donate are sorted, selected and shipped in response to partner needs.

Giorgia



Hi Giorgia! As Book Aid International's Partnerships Manager, could you tell us what type of books can be offered to partners?

While we can't offer specific titles or ISBNs, since we never know what books our UK Publishers donors will send, we can offer a huge range of categories, from pre-nursery and ECD books all the way up to post-graduate medical and tertiary education books. These may include picture books, books that can support primary or secondary schools' curriculum, as well as most subjects relevant to medical studies and practice and tertiary education, from humanities to science and art.

And although we can't guarantee we will be able to donate them, we still want to know if partners have specific requests as we never know if these books may be in stock at the time of selection as well as giving us good examples of the books that are needed and of interest

How do you decide which books go to which partner?

A big part of this is matching the current stock available at the time of selection with each partner specific needs. We ask our partners to fill in a comprehensive 'Requirements form', and we use this to inform us of the partners' needs but also of the context in which the books will be used. When available, we also use feedback from previous donations (through the Partners' Report forms) as this will give us an indication of what books were most or less

useful or even if the partners wish to receive more or fewer copies of the same book. We use all the resources that we have to try and tailor the selections as much as possible to each individual partner.

What is the best part of your job?

Without a doubt is to learn about our partners' work and successes, as well as reading the stories and experiences from end-users and how having access to quality and engaging books have impacted their lives. It can be easy to get lost in the logistics and operational side of sending books, so being able to read a personal account of a readers takes me right into a community library in Zambia, for example, and this really brings it home for me. I also occasionally receive thank you letters from students, and that too is really lovely, as they tell me what they are studying, how their scores have improved, or about a book they have read and really love.

Owen



Owen, as the charity's Facilities and H&S Officer, you're often seen around the warehouse sorting books ready for selection, what criteria do you use to guide you through the weeding process?

Our Book Provision Team has developed a set of criteria that will determine whether a book is suitable for adding to our stock for selection. Some of the criteria are general to all books, such as:

- **Condition**
 - they must be new and in good condition.
- **Currency**
 - whether the book is up to date so that the content is relevant to the subjects covered.
- **Cultural specificity**
 - such as whether a book is relevant and appropriate to a particular culture or social group.
- **Demand**
 - I try to stock the items that our partners have expressed a specific need for in time for us to have it ready for selection and packing.

Any book that does not meet these criteria will not enter our stock.

How do you keep informed about the partners' needs?

I take part in regular meetings with the Book Provision Team to keep our selection criteria up to date and relevant. These meetings lay out any changes to our partners' requests as well as allowing us to discuss ways of improving the quality of the service we provide and of our database. They are an essential tool for me to make good decisions when processing donated stock and also give us the opportunity to define more specific criteria for a particular partner or country. It is an important aspect of my role is to make it as easy as possible to get the right books to go the right partners every time.

What do you find the most rewarding part of your role at Book Aid International?

It's a bit like having a mini birthday every day, as I never know what little gems might be inside the next carton. I especially like pop-up books - they have become so sophisticated over the years and the level of skill & imagination required to make them is impressive. I would have loved to have received one of them when I was little. Without fail, opening a pop-up book for the first time will be a delight for a child - and from my experience, for most adults too. It is also very satisfying to receive a book that a partner has specifically asked for and we are able to send it out on the next shipment to them.

David



Dave, could you tell us what the process of booking and sending a container involves for you as the Shipping & Warehouse Supervisor?

Firstly, we need to establish when we are likely to finish packing all the donations included in the shipment and depending on the number of books donated whether the container will be 20ft or 40ft. I then usually contact three different shipping agents to obtain separate quotes to ensure we are as cost effective as possible. Once we agree on one of the quotes, the shipping agent will give us a loading date. On that date a lorry carrying the container will come to collect the books, and myself and another member of the Operations Team will load the consignment pallet by pallet using a forklift truck and an electric pump truck. The container will then be taken to the port ready to be loaded on the vessel.

The last two years have been particularly challenging. What difficulties have you experienced?

From a shipping perspective Covid-19 has caused all sorts of problems and delays at ports over the last couple of years. For example, last year we experienced severe delays in booking loading dates due to a shortage in HGV drivers, many of whom had returned to mainland Europe during the pandemic and remained there once the lockdowns were lifted. More recently, the rising cost of fuel has caused a marked increase to our shipping costs. As for our warehouse operations, like many others for about a year we worked with a much-reduced team, so that we could follow the guidance on social distancing, which impacted our out-put capacity to send books. Thankfully, we are now getting back to our full capacity.

That sounds challenging! What makes it all worthwhile?

I find it particularly satisfying when I hear that the books have arrived with our consignee, especially when the partners send me some photographs of the books being unloaded from the container or being put onto the library shelves. Also, when the final container of the year leaves the warehouse, knowing that we have been able to send over a million books to support our partners, is always a great moment.

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.



Book Aid
International

Book Aid International is a charity and limited company registered in England and Wales.
Charity no: 313869 Company no: 880754.
Registered Office: 39-41, Coldharbour Lane, London SE5 9NR

www.bookaid.org