Our Theory of Change
How we change lives in the long-term
About us

Millions of people are unable to reach their full potential because they do not have books. At Book Aid International we share the power of books and help create a more equal world.

Our Power of Books strategy focuses on the people who face the greatest barriers to reading and learning. It is our next step towards a world where everyone has access to the books that will enrich, improve and change their lives.

Our Theory of Change outlines the change we want to see in the communities where we work and how we see our role in making that change happen.

The Challenge

Around the world, there are millions of people who have never seen or held a new book. Many schoolchildren can learn only by sharing a single threadbare textbook, and there are millions of people who have never been encouraged to read, or to escape into the pages of a book.

People in the poorest communities are unable to buy books and are often the least likely to have access to a well-stocked school or public library.

Climate change, conflict and disaster are increasingly forcing people from their homes, closing schools, destroying libraries and leaving millions without the chance to read.

In the communities where we work, libraries and schools are often under-funded and unable to buy the up to date, relevant and inspiring books that could give readers the power to shape their futures.

SDG 4 Quality Education is hampered at all levels through a lack of books in schools and learning institutions.

By 2030 40% of young people in the world will be in Africa and they may not have had the opportunity to engage with books.

The change we want to see

We want more people, especially in marginalised communities to experience the power of books.

A book might seem like a small thing in the battle against inequality. But we see every day how books can spark a transformation.

With books, the quality of education soars – and children reach their potential. With books, families fighting poverty learn new skills to grow businesses that thrive. With books, a better future feels more achievable than ever.

When people feel hopeless, books can create a renewed sense of optimism and self-belief. And when they are available – instead of out of reach – communities become stronger.

Every book is a bridge away from inequality and towards a fairer, brighter future, and we want everyone to have the opportunity to read.

More libraries are established especially in marginalised communities.

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We provide books by supporting a wide range of partners in some of the world’s poorest and most marginalised communities – from libraries in rural schools to mobile libraries travelling through deprived urban communities.

More people at all ages accessing books for pleasure, study and life-long learning.

We want access to books for everyone, including:

- Early grade learners, primary school and secondary school pupils accessing well chosen, brand-new books that supplement curriculum textbooks
- Teachers using a range of books to create rich, engaging lessons
- Professionals finding books for their continuous professional development
- Retired citizens finding leisure reading books and fiction to relax with
- Librarians leading innovative projects to start communities reading in neighbourhoods
- Medical institutions providing modern medical texts to advance learning
- Inmates reading in prisons.

More awareness of the importance of books and reading

We want to see our partners leading the way in creating opportunities to showcase books and libraries and advocating the important role reading and books have in society.
What is our role in making change happen?

Every year, we provide over one million new books to the places they will make the biggest difference, and we set up libraries, train people to run them and work with our partners to spark a love of reading.

We ensure that women and girls and people forced from their homes have access to books as they are particularly at risk from not having an opportunity to read due to difficult circumstances.

In all of the places where we work, our partners tell us which books people need most, and we select and provide a carefully chosen range of titles in response to their requests. The books we provide are shipped to a distribution partner who distributes the books throughout their communities. All of the books we provide from the UK are donated to us for free by publishers and the book trade.

Almost all of the books we provide from the UK are in English, and we provide books for people of every age and background – from picture books right through to advanced medical and law texts.

We focus on providing books to people living in the world’s poorest communities, people facing marginalisation and exclusion and people whose lives have been disrupted by disaster and conflict.

Even if wars, disasters or a lack of roads and buildings make it tough to reach communities, we find a way. In the places where it’s hardest to become a doctor or where teachers struggle to encourage children to dream big, that’s where we’re determined to put the power of books in people’s hands.

We also fund the purchase of thousands of locally published books each year, many of which are in local languages, enriching book collections. We work with national library services and NGO partners to strengthen their capacity to establish exciting new places to read and run activities that promote reading in communities.

In addition, we provide grants for projects that involve training and monitoring of focused activities. We provide training and coaching to partners, building and strengthening the capacity of their staff and organisations so they can expand their work to support reading in their country in the long term.

We work in over 25 countries around the world. The majority of our work takes place in sub-Saharan Africa where English is widely spoken and many communities face high levels of poverty. We also respond to requests for books from beyond Africa, in particular in response to disaster and war. We work with over 180 partners around the world to give people the opportunity to read, and we only provide books in response to their requests.

Together with our partners worldwide, we work everywhere from refugee camps, prisons and hospitals to remote schools where there has never been a library before. Our partners focus on everything from girls’ education to fighting poverty – and we work with them to provide the books and inspiration people need to discover the power of reading and realise their potential.

Direct and indirect contributions to change

Together with our partners and local stakeholders we support citizens to access information and to work towards developing a culture of reading.

Direct Contributions

We send brand new, English books in a range of categories and subjects according to partner requirements.

We work in collaboration with NGO partners, national and community library services, head teachers and education officials, we create opportunities to establish equitable access to books by readers in a wide range of settings.

We equip teachers to be confident in using new donated books to supplement classroom resources and library staff are upskilled and become motivated readers themselves, motivating others.

We provide books to schools that enable children to read in and outside of school time. Our partnerships support people in the poorest countries to have the opportunity to read and actively engage with books.

Indirect Contributions

The impact of our direct contributions can lead to others making changes that support greater access and support of reading. When working together, a range of people can voice their support for the need for books to be accessible to local authorities, policy and government decision makers:

- Governments will have a vision for a knowledge economy and a literate society. They make policy and funds available to ensure schools have libraries and libraries have book budgets etc.
- Local authorities ringfence budgets for libraries because they see the value they make to communities.
- Parents and carers use local library services for learning and information.

Assumptions underpinning our Theory of Change

- Our partners value the books we provide and have a clear idea how to make them available and use them in their work
- Our partners are best placed to decide which books will most benefit their readers
- Our partners have the capacity to receive our books, integrate them within their programmes and report on their use
Our Theory of Change

Millions of people are unable to reach their full potential because they do not have books. Our Theory of Change describes our response to this fundamental challenge.

What we do:
- Donate brand-new, carefully selected books to library, education and NGO partners
- Strengthen our partners’ capacity to support reading by providing grants and training
- Advocate for access to books for all

What our partners do:
- Make the books we provide available to readers, especially in marginalised communities
- Implement projects that create reading spaces and bring books to life
- Advocate at national and local level for the importance of books

This results in:
- More libraries and reading spaces set up and supported
- More people at all ages accessing books for pleasure, study and life-long learning
- More awareness of the importance of books and reading

Which leads to:
- Collaboration: People working in partnership to establish vibrant spaces where readers can access books
- Engagement with reading: People in marginalised communities actively engaged with books and reading
- Equitable access: People facing the greatest barriers to reading and learning gaining the opportunity to read
- Support for books: People advocating for the potential of books to transform lives and working to make books available to all