

Piloting Impact Assessment

Eight lessons in literacy and learning



Book Aid
International



Executive Summary

In 2023 Book Aid International piloted an impact measurement process which would help us better understand the impact of our work on individual lives, communities and organisations in a range of countries and settings.

We defined impact as the positive or negative, intended, or unintended effects or changes that are believed or observed to come about due to our work providing books and delivering programmes and projects with our partners.

Working with consultants from INTRAC¹, we developed an impact framework and process which involved gathering stories from our partners, verifying those stories and identifying the most significant change from those stories.

We consider a partnership to be a mutually beneficial relationship, that is based on trust and equality. The collaboration will have a specific focus to engage communities with books and reading as a shared goal. In 2022, we supported 185 partners in 26 countries. Our partners included community-based organisations (CBOs), non-profit organisations (NGOs) and national institutions such as national library services.

We analysed these stories alongside the quantitative data we collected when we provide books and run programmes.

We found that:

- › Collaboration with partners who have a shared passion and commitment to reading and learning leads to positive outcomes for people who face disadvantage and other barriers to reach their full economic, social and personal potential
- › Easy access to carefully selected, brand-new, up-to-date, relevant content engages and benefits readers in every country where we work
- › Our work is contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals²
- › Our partnerships - characterised by book donations, funding and project management support - are strengthening local organisations and their role in supporting reading promotion and learning in-country

We also drew from our learnings eight **Impact Statements** which describe the different ways our work has led to positive outcomes. They are:

- 1. Book donations create opportunities to grow innovative education provision and support learners.**
In countries where lives are impacted by poverty and inequality and where people are excluded from the opportunity to read, the provision of relevant books can improve the education experience of learners, through innovative, partner-led programmes.
- 2. Book donations allow education to continue when conflict disrupts school.**
Where people are forced to flee, book donations to education partners offer a chance to provide quality education, contributing to improved wellbeing and providing hope for the future.
- 3. Large quantities of books can increase and transform reading engagement.**
A large donation of books can act as a substantial boost to partners who are keen to revive or activate reading in their context, with large-scale book donations being particularly important where there is a lack of a reading “culture” or where books have been lost and need to be replaced.
- 4. Brand-new spaces to read and learn attract community members of all ages.**
Environments that are freshly painted, secure, well-ventilated, have good furniture and do not look like a classroom have been shown to attract and encourage reading for pleasure, especially amongst children.
- 5. Small book donations can provide significant support to learners.**
The most needed books, even in small quantities, can make a huge difference to those in need of them for their studies, leading to greater enthusiasm in learning.

6. Up-to-date books improve teaching as well as learning.

Supplementary fiction and non-fiction titles can act as great material for introducing subjects and topics in the classroom and provide specific support for teachers' development.

7. New knowledge strengthens partner capacity, increasing agency.

Where a programme of learning support is designed by partners and delivered in a way they find effective, partner capacity to run projects and promote reading is strengthened for the long term.

8. New skills lead to improved projects and organisational management, and better outcomes for readers.

When partner capacity is strengthened, organisations and their work are positively affected and readers benefit.

This interim report will focus on these eight impact statements. It will include quantitative data reflecting books donated to support those outcomes as well as the stories of change which illustrate what change means for readers.

It will also indicate where our work has contributed in a small way to a nation's achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and how meeting our objectives, as outlined in our five year *Power of Books* strategy, is guiding us in making that contribution.

We consider a partnership to be a mutually beneficial relationship, that is based on trust and equality.

Our partnerships - characterised by book donations, funding and project management support - are strengthening local organisations and their role in supporting reading promotion and learning in-country.

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What we do

At Book Aid International, we share the power of books and help create a more equal world.

Around the world, millions of people do not have access to the books they need because they cannot afford to buy books, the books they need are not on sale, and poorly funded or inaccessible public and school libraries cannot offer good quality up-to-date books. This lack of books reduces opportunities to read and learn, limiting people's life chances, curtailing education and denying millions the pleasure of reading.

Every year, we provide over one million brand-new books to partners around the world. We also work with our partners to create and support reading spaces, train teachers and librarians and help partners expand their work. We provide books in the following categories:

Adult fiction

Adult leisure reading

Children and primary

Development

English language skills

Higher education

Law

Medical

Professional (business and finance)

Reference

Secondary

Teacher training

Teen fiction and non-fiction

Vocational

About 60% of the books we provide are for children at primary school level. All the books we supply are donated to us by publishers and carefully selected based on partners' requests to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

In an average year, up to 21 million people³ have the opportunity to read the books we provide, and since 2016 we have worked with 317 partners in 35 countries.

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.

Taking the next step toward our vision

Our work is predicated on our Theory of Change alongside extensive research, which shows that increased access to relevant information and learning material leads to increased reading and this in turn contributes to human potential being realised.

You can view our Theory of Change, including an explanation of our direct and indirect contributions to change here: <https://bookaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Book-Aid-International-Theory-of-Change.pdf>

Our Theory of Change underpins our work and guides our organisational strategies, decision making and practice, moving us towards our vision in any given strategic period.

Our 2022 – 2025 *Power of Books* strategy commits us to focusing on four key areas:

- › Goal 1: EQUITY – Prioritise reaching more people who face the greatest barriers to reading and learning
- › Goal 2: ENGAGEMENT - Engage more people with reading, especially in underserved, rural and marginalised communities
- › Goal 3: PARTNERSHIP – Develop dynamic relationships with organisations that share our vision of creating more equitable access to books
- › Goal 4: ADVOCACY – Advocate for the transformational power of books

It also commits us to supporting the delivery of the SDGs, particularly in the provision of quality education, good health and wellbeing and gender equality, through increased access to the information contained in books.

Methodology

In our impact measurement, we seek to strengthen how we measure, understand and communicate our impact on the world, using an impact framework which allows us to monitor progress towards achieving the goals outlined in our Power of Books strategy.

Our impact framework helps us to be accountable to the people and organisations that we work with, as well as to understand and support learning in the organisation and with partners. It allows us to be open and transparent about the quality of our work, so that we can improve what we do.

What data did we gather?

Our impact framework is aligned to our four strategic goals: equity, engagement, partnership and advocacy, with key performance indicators for each goal. Quantitative data was collected against each goal and includes number of books donated, number of libraries supported, partner staff trained, numbers of people who gained access to books and number of ways the access is created.

We used impact stories to capture the richness and complexity of the changes that are brought about from the books we provide. The impact story approach links verified stories of change to long-term outcomes described in our strategy and theory of change. In this report one “change” is described in each story, represented by an “impact statement” which explains the general outcome achieved.

How we gathered our data

Quantitative data collection

All partners that receive a donation of books during the reporting period were asked to complete a partner report form, collecting statistics on where they have distributed donated books. Quantitative data was also collected through project training reports, monitoring reports and final evaluation reports.

Qualitative data collection

Our impact framework proposes gathering impact stories related to three key areas of our work:

- (i) the transformational impact of improving access to books in underserved environments (equity goal)

- (ii) how support to libraries and reading spaces has transformed people’s engagement with books and reading (engagement goal)
- (iii) how support from Book Aid International has strengthened partner capacity to deliver high-impact projects that create access to books and promote reading and increase capacity in running their organisations (partnership goal)

Our impact story approach involves a systematic process for gathering, selecting, verifying, and analysing stories to produce a credible set of cases that represent and illustrate the kinds of changes that our work is bringing about.

For 2022 we collected impact stories from a sample of 12 of our partners (approx. 8% of our total 150 partner population). For 2023 we collected stories from a sample of 26 (approx. 17% of our partner population). We purposively selected the stories using the following criteria:

- › Partners are from low- or middle-income countries
- › Partners have received books following a natural disaster
- › Partners work in underserved locations or in conflict-affected or fragile states, or focus on girls and their education
- › Partners work to establish new libraries or reading spaces, or their work can demonstrate the power of books through regular access
- › Partners who have participated in our Partner Development Programme (PDP)⁴
- › Partners have received the book donation in the previous year and books have been used for a minimum of six months following donation
- › Partners have implemented one of our projects

We excluded partners who were one-off recipients of the books we provide.

The sampled partners were asked if they would be willing to submit an impact story using a standard template to describe any changes they have witnessed because of our book donations in their own networks, in the projects they were implementing or in the wider community. They were asked why the changes are important and what was the specific contribution of the partner and of our work to the change.

The stories were then verified by our staff through cross-checking secondary data from partners' reports and through conversations, interviews and focus groups with key informants, such as community-based librarians, schoolteachers, community members and readers affected by the change.

Specifically, partners who were participating in our PDP were invited to identify changes either to their project delivery and/or to their internal organisational capacities, and to submit an impact story showing either how their organisation's support to libraries and reading spaces has changed engagement with books and reading and/or about how being part of the PDP has influenced how their organisation functions.

The final set of stories illustrate how by working with our partners, we are contributing to achieving the SDGs and delivering on the goals outlined in our Theory of Change and our *Power of Books* strategy.

What were the limitations of our impact methodology?

The limitations to our impact story gathering method included:

- › The small story sample size selected from the 150+ partner population, based on our capacity to contact, verify and develop impact stories
- › The dependence on Zoom, email and poor connection or bandwidth in some cases prevented easy and natural conversations
- › Not all of our verification interviews included readers, though in all cases stakeholders who had engaged directly with readers were contacted or they gathered reader feedback on our behalf

What were the challenges encountered in our methodology?

1. *Not all partners invited to share stories responded in detail:* While all partners who were invited to share stories of change responded quickly and positively, there was a range in quality of responses. A small number of partners wrote minimal answers in the template provided and eliciting additional information was challenging.
2. *New online form:* A small number of partners had teething problems with accessing the data gathering form, but this was quickly fixed. We also noticed that multiple partners were responding incorrectly to the same questions, so questions were changed to make sure they are as clear as possible, in what information we are asking partners to provide.
3. *Verifying stories of change:* The verification of stories was initially planned to be an online exercise and in a small number of 2022 stories, this was successful. However, in most cases, this proved extremely difficult. Partners had challenges in engaging third parties, such as higher management government officials, children and students, through Zoom, due to busy schedules or schools not offering Zoom facilities. Flights to carry out face to face verification were not budgeted for in 2022 and extra trips for the sole purpose of verification would go against our climate change policy.

What were the challenges that affected our impact?

1. *We were not always able to send books to the communities most in need:* For example, in 2023, we experienced challenges in our support for partners in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and were unable to send books.
2. *Providing the right reading level of book for every community is difficult:* Sometimes the books available at the time of selection and shipping from the UK is not in line with the correct reading level of the reader. Similarly, for a minority of our partners, selection by a non-librarian partner does not take reading level into account. In both cases, this can lead to books not being read or used and/or disappointment for the reader.

Impact statements

Our impact statements include the key learnings which emerged from our analysis of all of the data gathered through our impact framework. Each is illustrated by a story which brings the statement to life and represents the types of changes that are taking place across the communities where we work.

We know these stories to be illustrative because they complement and are supported by other sources, which include:

- › The other monitoring and evaluation data that we routinely collect through projects monitoring visits and final evaluations
- › Book donation partner report forms and partner impact reports collected annually
- › Letters of appreciation we have received

Where relevant, we have included quantitative data gathered in 2022 which supports each impact statement.



Impact statement 1:

Book donations create opportunities to grow innovative education provision and supports learners



52.8%

of books provided reached low-income⁵ countries

Related Strategic Goal: Equitable access to books



1,519

schools in low-income countries supported

Where lives are impacted by poverty and inequality and where people are excluded from the opportunity to read, the provision of relevant supplementary books can improve the education experience of learners through innovative, partner-led programmes.

This story of change provides one example of how supporting change makers with books leads to innovative ways to assist learners.

In Ghana a lack of foundational reading skills contributes to just 47% of children completing lower secondary school, and girls are being affected disproportionately. Our book donations are helping one highly educated young woman, Bushirata, engage girls through reading clubs and mentoring programmes. This is her story:

Growing confidence in Ghana's girls

In Ghana, many children face significant challenges in developing essential reading skills. A 2015 USAID study revealed that most learners in public schools couldn't read with comprehension by the end of Primary 2. While 71% of Ghanaian children complete primary school, only 47% finish lower secondary, and a mere 35% graduate from upper secondary.⁶

This educational gap stems largely from a lack of foundational skills in reading and numeracy. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the problem, with school closures and economic hardships driving more children out of school. Girls have been disproportionately affected, with increased child marriages and reduced access to education in rural areas like Kassena Nankana West District, where families depend on small-scale farming to survive.⁷ In response to these challenges, one young woman, Bushirata Kumuriwor, founded the Learners Girls Foundation (LGF) in 2021 after witnessing firsthand the lack of educational resources in her community. Returning from university during the pandemic, she began informal reading sessions for children under trees. Recognising the urgent need for books and safe learning spaces, she established LGF to empower girls and support their education.

With the support of Book Aid International, LGF received 4,610 UK-donated books. These resources are now integral to LGF's community library, mentorship programmes, and junior high school reading clubs. These initiatives, run by a dedicated group of volunteers, aim to foster a love of learning and build girls' confidence in a region where educational opportunities are limited.

"My community is also a typical village where there is no access to books," explained one LGF volunteer. "Education as a whole is very difficult."

To date, LGF's mentorship programme has reached approximately 500 girls, and reading clubs have been set up in five schools, with around 20 learners participating in each. The mentorship programme provides a safe space for girls to share their challenges and receive practical guidance. Bushirata described the programme as "someone they can openly talk to," to help girls navigate personal and educational barriers.

The reading clubs prioritise girls who make up 70% of all engaged students. Volunteers carefully select relatable books for the clubs that encourage reflection and self-expression. The clubs also give girls dedicated time to read, which is often unavailable at home due to domestic responsibilities. "In the house, girls don't get time [to read] because of house chores," said a 13-year-old club member. "But having the books with us allows our parents to give us some time to read."

Through its efforts, LGF has transformed access to education for children, particularly girls, in the Kassena Nankana West District. With Book Aid International's continued support, LGF plans to expand its reach by establishing a school library, ensuring even more children benefit from these life-changing resources.

Impact statement 2:

Book donations allow education to continue when conflict disrupts school



126

refugee settings supported

Related strategic goal: Equity



131,452

refugees with the opportunity to read

Conflict and disaster force people to flee every day, leaving millions without the chance to read and learn. Book donations to education partners offer a much-appreciated chance for people who have been displaced to receive a quality education and also contribute to improved wellbeing, offering hope to people who have been displaced.

This story of change is from Cameroon, where conflict in North West and South West regions has disrupted education, causing more than 600,000 pupils to miss years of schooling.

Our partners, Street Child and Blessings Associates for Women and Children, work with teachers, parents, and carers to prioritise reading at school and at home. Their story reflects many others we hear about people fighting for reading and learning in the face of conflict, and illustrates the larger message that books are valuable for people affected by conflict.

Supporting the parent-teacher during a crisis

Since 2017, conflict between the government and separatists in Cameroon has displaced over 680,000 people within the country, creating a humanitarian crisis. The North West and South West regions have been hit hardest, with education severely disrupted. Armed insurgents have burned schools and driven teachers and pupils away, leaving approximately 600,000 children without effective schooling for years.

Although schools began reopening in 2020, the majority of children have missed around five years of schooling, leaving them with significant gaps in reading and learning skills. Displaced children are returning to classrooms ill-equipped for formal education, while schools struggle to accommodate their needs. Parents and caregivers in communities, already burdened by displacement, face challenges supporting their children's learning at home.⁸

In 2022, Book Aid International partnered with Street Child Cameroon to address these challenges through the *Read Together* project. This initiative focuses on creating opportunities for primary learners to develop a love of reading, both in school and at home. The project included setting up school libraries, training parents and teachers, and fostering community

engagement. A local NGO, Blessings Associates for Women and Children (BAWAC) was also involved to ensure community buy-in and secure implementation.

Book Aid International provided over 2,600 books from the UK, alongside a grant to purchase 300 Cameroonian books. Two primary schools in Likomba were selected, reaching approximately 2,000 learners and their families. Eight teachers, 200 parents and caregivers, and eight community members were trained to promote reading.

Teachers embraced creative approaches to engage students. "We act [out] the parts of the characters," shared one learner, illustrating how books have brought learning to life. Teachers also introduced activities like "read with your friend," encouraging peer-to-peer reading. These efforts, combined with the new school libraries, have given children greater access to books both in the classroom and at home.

Parents, too, have become vital to their children's learning. Training sessions equipped 200 parents and caregivers with strategies to support reading at home. Many parents now read the books themselves, modelling a love for reading that inspires their children. "Children like to read when they see you reading," shared one parent. For some, even those unable to read, the eagerness to borrow books and seek advice on supporting their children is a powerful testament to the project's impact.

Communities have also rallied around the initiative. Eleven "Book Banks" (boxes of books) were established, offering families convenient access to borrow books. Community Education Committees were formed to engage parents, teachers, and local leaders. Reading clubs sprang up in neighbourhoods around the book banks, creating spaces for children to gather and explore stories together. One community leader who hosts a book bank said: "Most visits to my home were to report disputes. Now, families come to borrow books - it's a welcome change."

The *Read Together* project has transformed education in Likomba, creating a culture of reading among children, parents and communities. Building on this success, Book Aid International and Street Child Cameroon plan to expand the programme to other regions with high numbers of displaced people, offering hope and learning to even more families in crisis.

Impact statement 3:

Large quantities of books can increase and transform reading engagement



34.8%

of the books we provided reached disaster and conflict affected countries.

Related strategic goal: Engagement

A large donation of books can act as a substantial help to partners who are keen to revive and activate reading in their context. This is particularly true where there is a lack of a reading culture or where books have been lost to conflict or disaster. In these circumstances, reading experiences are often transformed by a substantial book donation.

This story is from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where in 2021 volcanic ash ruined much of the island's infrastructure, including schools and libraries. Responding during the recovery period, a 40-foot container of books acted as an investment in library stock and new learning initiatives for children. It illustrates how a larger-scale book donation can create change which is substantial and sustained across multiple libraries and learning spaces.

From ashes to opportunity: Restoring libraries in St. Vincent

The island nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, an eastern Caribbean archipelago of 32 islands and cays, faced devastation on April 9, 2021, when La Soufrière volcano erupted. The violent eruption blanketed much of St. Vincent in thick volcanic ash, causing significant damage to homes, infrastructure and public spaces. Two public libraries in the hardest-hit areas, Owia and Sandy Bay, were forced to close entirely, with their collections destroyed.

In response, Book Aid International delivered 14,235 books in April 2022 to the National Public Library, Archive and Documentation Service (NPLADS), which oversees libraries across nine inhabited islands. This donation, including 5,208 children's books and 2,016 titles for older students, provided essential support to rebuild the library network's collection.

Donna McLean, a librarian at the main Richmond Hill library, recalls the moment she opened the shipment: "At first, I was like, 'Oh my gosh... there's a lot.' I've worked with books, but never so many at one time. It was overwhelming - but exciting. I'm always excited when I see books."

Over the following months, the donation enabled the reopening of the Owia and Sandy Bay libraries, restoring critical community services. McLean explained that the library network's collection had grown significantly, allowing new programmes to develop:

"We now have an after-school programme where we cater to children struggling with maths, English and reading. Trained tutors spend an hour with small groups, working on their reading and phonics. We do assessments to see where they need help. The maths, English, and science books we received have been invaluable."

One such programme, run at the Rose Hall library, focuses on remedial education for Grade 2 to Grade 5 students. One of the programme's tutors who has witnessed its impact first-hand said: "The only way children can boost their reading skills is through programmes like these. They're encouraged to read, read, read. Having that extra person to guide them improves their speech patterns and phonetics." Beyond children's learning, the donation has sparked greater engagement among adults: "Before the eruption, many adults thought the library was just for children. But with new books for adults and children alike, more adults are now visiting and using the library."

The transformation is evident not just in reopened libraries but in revitalised communities. For instance, the after-school programme draws parents, children and tutors together, fostering a culture of shared learning.

Book Aid International's disaster response has profoundly impacted St. Vincent and the Grenadines, enabling the library service to rebuild and reach new audiences. This initiative has not only restored collections but inspired a renewed love of reading across all ages. Libraries in St. Vincent now stand as hubs of learning and hope, demonstrating the power of books to rebuild lives and communities.

Impact statement 4:

Brand-new spaces to read and learn attract community members of all ages



456

new school libraries established

Related strategic goal: Engagement

Environments that are freshly painted, secure, well ventilated, have good furniture and do not look like a classroom are perfect places to encourage reading for pleasure, especially amongst children. Spaces that are established in unusual places but are reachable by community members are particularly valuable for engaging people with reading.

This story of change is from Rwanda and illustrates how distances to public libraries can prohibit access to books. Our partner, the INEZA Foundation, created a community library from a disused shipping container, providing one community with much-needed access to a beautiful, functional reading space. This enabled a renewed focus on reading and other positive outcomes for children and adults.

INEZA's experiences echo others we have heard where partners have created reading spaces which have become community hubs.

A new chapter for Jabana: Rwanda's Community Container Library

Rwanda's National Policy for Library Services highlights the critical need for personal reading and access to books to enhance literacy and foster a reading culture. Yet in some areas, such as Jabana in the Gasabo district, access to libraries has been nearly impossible. The nearest library, Kigali Public Library, is a 10km, two-hour walk away - a significant barrier for children and community members alike.

In 2022, this changed dramatically with the establishment of a *Community Container Library* in Jabana, a collaborative effort between the INEZA Foundation and Book Aid International. The library, a 40-foot converted shipping container, now serves a community of around 63,000 people.

Book Aid International provided 5,000 UK-donated books, a grant to buy 500 books in Kinyarwanda, funding to transform the container into a functioning library and training for 14 library staff. The library officially opened in July 2022, offering a collection ranging from picture books and graded readers to secondary subject books and leisure reading for adults.

In just six months following its opening, the container library recorded 6,850 visits, with over 100 children using its services daily. Alongside the library, the INEZA Foundation also established a community Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre, providing additional support for young learners. The library has profoundly impacted the community. INEZA Project Manager, Janvier Niyonsaba, observed, "Since the establishment of the two resources, parents are more active in reading activities with their children. This was unheard of before the library opened."

INEZA founder Elizabeth Mujawamariya Johnson added, "Reading is not common to most Jabana residents. However, with the presence of trained librarians, parents have noticed a positive change in behaviour at home and among children participating in library activities."

Parents whose children frequently visit the library shared the benefits: "This library helped my children learn new vocabulary in English and Kinyarwanda. They've improved in their English reading and now share what they've read with us at home. The variety and quality of books have sparked their curiosity and enthusiasm for reading."

One young reader said: "I like the books at Jabana library because there are new books we don't have at my school. I can borrow many and share them with my friends." Her mother was equally enthusiastic, noting how the library provides access to English books that would otherwise be costly to purchase.

The library has also become a hub for group learning, homework assistance, and social development through reading clubs and games. Thanks to this collaboration, the INEZA Foundation and Book Aid International have transformed Jabana into a vibrant community of readers, creating opportunities for children and adults alike to discover the joy and power of books. This new container library marks a vital step in fostering a culture of literacy and learning in the area, ensuring that the vision of Rwanda's National Policy for Library Services becomes a reality in Jabana.

Impact statement 5:

Small book donations can provide significant support to learners

Related strategic goal: Engagement

Even in small quantities, books can make a huge difference, particularly for those still completing their studies, as a small number of the most needed books can unlock new learning dynamics.

This story of change is from Ethiopia where an unused secondary school library was revived with new books, stirring greater engagement by teachers and students and providing a boost to science learning. It illustrates many partners' experiences of reviving smaller reading spaces which can have a big impact.

Enabling Ethiopia's future scientists through access to knowledge

In Ethiopia, secondary education plays a critical role in shaping the country's next generation of scientists, engineers and innovators. However, access to quality resources remains a significant barrier, especially in rural areas. With only 33.1% of secondary school-age children nationally enrolled and just 3% of students achieving the 50% mark required for university entrance, the need for robust educational support is evident.

Recognising this challenge, the Hawassa University Library Outreach Programme (HULOP) has partnered with Book Aid International to address resource gaps. Led by librarian Mulugeta Woldestadik, HULOP focuses on supporting schools in underserved areas of Ethiopia, particularly in the Sidama region.

In late 2022, Book Aid International dispatched 1,261 books to 11 institutions in the region, including Shantawene Secondary School, a rural school located 170km from Hawassa. The school received 192 books focusing on maths, physics and computer science to bolster its curriculum.

At the time of the donation, Shantawene Secondary School served 1,260 students (597 girls and 663 boys) and had a teaching faculty of 37. However, its library had previously been underutilised, with worn-out textbooks and an unfavourable reading space.

The arrival of the Book Aid International books, coupled with HULOP's efforts to reorganise and promote the library, has revitalised the school's library services. The library was relocated to a more conducive space and the new books made more prominently available.

As a result, students and teachers are now more engaged with library resources, which has improved classroom instruction, encouraged independent learning, and enhanced academic outcomes.

"Until Book Aid International donated the latest reference books on various subjects, the library service at Shantawene was almost inactive," shared Woldestadik. "The school director, in collaboration with teachers, made great efforts to organise and promote the library to students. Now, the library is proactively supporting teaching and learning."

The school principal echoed this sentiment: "I gave students assignments from the new books. They went to the library, referred to the books, and completed their assignments effectively. Their performance in examinations has also improved."

The 192 books donated to Shantawene Secondary School are already making a tangible difference. Teachers and students are utilising them to enrich their studies, and the library has become a vital learning hub for the school community.

The partnership between Book Aid International and HULOP aims to continue expanding and sustaining libraries in rural Sidama, creating more opportunities for students to achieve academic success and pursue careers in STEM fields. By bridging the resource gap, initiatives like this are unlocking the potential of Ethiopia's future scientists.

Impact statement 6:

Up-to-date books improve teaching as well as learning



77,965

brand-new medical texts provided

Related strategic goal: Engagement



87,186

higher education, law and teacher training books provided

Supplementary fiction and non-fiction titles can act as great material for introducing subjects and topics in the classroom, as well as providing specific support for teachers' continuous development. Higher and further education texts enrich those pursuing advanced degrees, and further the knowledge of practicing professionals.

This story of change from The Gambia provides insights into how a small number of significant titles can be the catalyst for improved grades and enhanced library services. It reflects partners' experiences across teaching environments ranging from EDC to university level of using books to enhance teaching.

Transforming nursing education in The Gambia

The Foundation School for Nurse Attendants (FSNA), located in Kanifing, The Gambia, is a national institution attracting students from across Africa, including Nigeria and Sierra Leone. It provides foundational training for students who later pursue advanced studies in fields like nursing, pharmacology, and microbiology. However, the school faced significant challenges in meeting its students' educational needs due to a severe shortage of academic resources.

Until recently, FSNA's library consisted of a small cupboard with limited books, forcing students to seek essential medical texts, such as the British National Formulary (BNF), from pharmacists or travel a two-hour round trip to Banjul's Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital Library. The intimidating and resource-strained environment at the hospital library added to the difficulties faced by FSNA students.

In November 2022, Book Aid International partnered with UNIQUE Foundation (UF), a Gambian NGO focused on community education, to provide a transformative donation of 100 medical and healthcare books to FSNA. These books covered a broad range of essential subjects, including pharmacology, paediatrics, surgical medicine and obstetrics.

The school responded by creating two new reading rooms, significantly expanding access to resources and providing dedicated spaces for study and research. Additionally, FSNA hired a librarian to manage the collection, ensuring that students and lecturers could make the most of the donated books.

The impact of the books has been profound. Students now have access to up-to-date, relevant resources, saving them the time and cost of travelling to external libraries. Lecturers have also benefited, using the new materials to prepare comprehensive teaching notes and enhance their instructional methods.

Mrs. Margaret Gomez, Director of FSNA, highlighted the transformative effect of the BNF and other resources: "The British National Formula book has been particularly valuable for students working on their project assignments. The new library has saved them time and money, and their academic performance has improved noticeably."

This improvement is evident in students' continuous assessments and project work, where marks have significantly increased. Lecturer Mr. Omar Joof shared: "Before, students scored 45, 60, 70 (%), but now, with the new books, they are scoring up to 100%. The marks are higher than before."

The collaboration between Book Aid International, UF, and FSNA has dramatically improved access to quality educational resources, benefiting both students and lecturers. The school is now equipped to better support its students in achieving their academic and professional goals.

UF plans to deepen its partnership with FSNA, providing additional book donations and tracking the long-term impact of these resources on student outcomes. This initiative marks a significant step toward improving healthcare education in The Gambia and enabling the next generation of medical professionals.

Impact statement 7:

New knowledge strengthens partner capacity, increasing agency



78%

of 9 partners rated 9/10 or 10/10 for satisfaction with the PDP

Related strategic goal: Partnership



88%

rated PDP support organisational development as 9/10 or 10/10

Continuous development of partners' organisations and their teams is an opportunity many often cannot afford. Where a programme of learning support is designed by partners and delivered in a way they find effective, organisational capacity is strengthened.

This story of change is from Zimbabwe where CEO of Edward Ndlovu Memorial Trust (ENMT) was a participant in our Partnership Development Programme (PDP). He shared how his newly acquired knowledge led to finding new opportunities for the organisation's work. This story reflects similar feedback we've had from other PDP participants.

Corporate funding fuels progress in Zimbabwe's rural literacy efforts

ENMT, founded in 1990 in Gwanda Town, Zimbabwe, has long been committed to improving education, health, and livelihoods in Matabeleland's rural communities. Through its flagship Edward Ndlovu Memorial Library (ENML), the trust runs literacy programmes and skills development initiatives, reaching adults, students and children alike. ENMT's rural outreach provides books to teachers and communities, while also fostering educational workshops and income-generating study circles.

Despite its impactful programs, ENMT has faced challenges in securing funding for its operations. For years, the organisation relied on a single funder, which limited its ability to expand and respond to growing community needs. In early 2023, ENML's annual fuel budget of \$2,000 was insufficient to sustain regular project monitoring visits, let alone expand.

Recognising the urgent need to diversify funding, ENMT's Executive Director, Michael Moyo, and four members of his team enrolled in Book Aid International's PDP. Through accessing the local fundraising online learning course, the team gained valuable insights into identifying and approaching potential funders.

Armed with new skills and confidence, Michael approached Blanket Gold Mine, a major business in

Gwanda, for support. The mine responded generously, providing ENMT with 250 litres of diesel and 100 litres of petrol per month for five months.

This in-kind donation proved transformative. It allowed ENMT to improve mobility ensuring timely deliveries to schools, and to increase the frequency of project monitoring visits, leading to quicker issue resolution and greater impact. ENMT has also been able to expand its Book Box program to an additional 11% of schools by the end of 2023, bringing books and learning opportunities to more children.

When interviewed, Blanket Gold Mine's Corporate Social Responsibility Officer, Samson Gombingo, praised ENML's work, noting its alignment with the mine's focus on education, health and community development. The mine expressed interest in deepening its partnership with ENMT to cover the entire district.

Beyond fundraising, through the PDP, ENMT staff completed online courses in project management, marketing essentials, leading teams through change and conflict management. Although the learning process was challenging due to poor internet connectivity and demanding workloads, the team found the effort worthwhile. Michael reflected on the training's impact:

"Those courses were eye-opening. The knowledge we gained is now embedded in our day-to-day work. The skills we acquired boosted our confidence in project delivery and community engagement. They also helped us secure local partnerships and achieve positive responses."

Thanks to the skills gained through the PDP and the support of other partners, ENMT is better positioned to sustain and expand its literacy programmes. The trust's achievements in 2023 demonstrate how local fundraising and capacity-strengthening can transform challenges into opportunities, ultimately creating lasting benefits for rural communities in Zimbabwe.

Impact statement 8:

New skills in project and organisational management lead to improved projects and organisational management and better outcomes for readers

Related strategic goal: Partnership

When partner capacity is strengthened, organisations and their work are positively affected and readers benefit.

This story of change is from Ghana, where the PDP experience has led to improved teamwork and effective project management by a teacher-led NGO, Rainbow Trust Foundation, leading to better engagement with local communities. It illustrates the kinds of outcomes for readers that can be achieved when partners are supported to develop their abilities.

Growing skills and deepening impact in Ghana

Rainbow Trust Foundation (RTF) is a small Ghanaian organisation, set up in 2013 by former primary school teacher Joyce Ampofo. RTF focuses on book provision and training to support reading for pleasure and lifelong learning, especially in underprivileged communities and schools. Based in Tema, on the outskirts of Accra, RTF is staffed by teachers, education officials and librarians.

Since 2015, RTF has received eight shipments of books and has distributed over 200,000 books to schools and libraries throughout the country. RTF has also become a key project partner and has implemented nine projects since 2021, supporting a total of 42 schools and communities.

RTF participated in the PDP and identified seven key areas for capacity strengthening. These included resource mobilisation, marketing, project management, networking and negotiation, monitoring and evaluation, volunteer engagement and change management.

As a small organisation, RTF is dependent on volunteers to help with many activities. RTF staff followed an online course on volunteer management and are now more confident in how volunteers are managed and integrated into activities, such as sorting and stamping books. Volunteers are also starting to run regular reading clinics and reading clubs in schools in the Tema area.

Project management and M&E courses have helped improve both the management and the outcomes of RTF's projects, with activities completed according to agreed timelines, improved data gathering and reporting.

Gilbert Osei Alomele, RTF Project Manager, shared how newly-learned project management skills have resulted in improved collaboration for the Book Aid International-funded projects. One of the projects was the *Community Reading Award-winner* "Books for the Boys" project implemented at a local correctional centre.

"Before the online training, projects were not completed on time and there was project lag. There was no one dedicated person managing the project, and there was firefighting as and when something had to happen. There weren't documents guiding the project. At the Senior Correctional Centre, we created a plan that we shared with the partner. We agreed timelines with them. They knew when RTF was coming in. The project is being delivered on time and on schedule."

Gilbert explained how the M&E training was "insightful and gave deeper understanding of the need for proper M&E of projects". He described how understanding the need for the Final Evaluation of the *Books to Go* library project enabled them to understand the impact of the project on the students:

"One of the kids said before the library was established, they would go and play a lot – at every opportunity. Since the library has been there, playing has reduced drastically, revealing their commitment to reading. They're always in the library looking for a book to read. They are attracted by the quality of the books."

RTF staff also learned the value of communicating their work via good writing and quality resources such as photos and videos. Gilbert explained, "We have learnt from the training on impactful report writing that you need to be concise and straightforward. No need to be writing so much to explain a small point. When you support with tables, diagrams and pictures, the sponsor knows and appreciates how well resources are being utilised. We improved on the style and content."

New knowledge on fundraising led to support in kind to promote reading through an International Literacy Day celebration. Gilbert went on: "We managed to bring on board a noodle manufacturing company. We wrote a proposal for sponsorship. And over 3,000 children participated. And the company provided and prepared noodles."

RTF has created access to and engagement with books for children in a wide range of settings and locations. Book Aid International has contributed to this through funding for projects and support through the PDP, with its free access to online and face-to-face learning and networking.

Participation in the PDP by RTF has led to more effective project management by the organisation and increased opportunities for local support. This has resulted in greater access to books and increased reading opportunities for children.

Learnings and next steps

This interim impact report is a snapshot of how the *Power of Books 2022-2025* strategy is achieving its goals and contributing to Book Aid International's vision.

The focus of this report has been on the key findings during the years 2022 and 2023, using the quantitative data gathered during the period and stories of change. These illustrate the kinds of changes we see as a result of our work with partners in the distribution of UK-donated books and project support.

The report shows how collaboration with partners who have a shared passion and commitment to reading provides **equitable access** to books and leads to positive outcomes for people who face disadvantage and other barriers to reach their full potential.

It also illustrates how easy access to books **engages** and benefits readers in every country where we work.

Our work plays a small role in countries improving education and prospects for lifelong learning, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. And our partnerships, characterised by book donations, funding and project management support, are strengthening national organisations and their role in supporting reading promotion and learning.

We will continue to use the impact framework throughout 2024 and 2025 to understand and assess the impact of our work over this entire five year strategic period.

Reflecting on the process of piloting our new impact framework, key learnings that we will build on as we consider the next steps on our impact measurement journey include:

- › The definition of impact is not always shared or understood in the same way, so having a shared definition with our partners which is framed by our theory of change is important.
- › The method of collecting stories is important in understanding from the partners' perspective what change has transpired and how important that change is for the readers they reach.

- › It takes time to follow-up and gather information to fill gaps in the first drafts of impact stories from partners, and online platforms are not always effective in reaching out to readers engaged in partners' projects. Many readers are often based in rural or hard to reach communities. We need to find new ways to engage readers in these situations.
- › Partners are willing to share their impact stories and will go the extra mile to identify additional evidence or information from third parties (people not connected to the partner) to verify the change. But this is limited by the time they can offer the process and costs of transportation. We need to engage partners early to discuss how we can engage those experiencing the impact effectively and early on.
- › Not all partners have the writing skills needed to tell a complete story of change. We need to ask them what's the best way for them to tell their story of impact in their own way.
- › More use of already planned in-country evaluations, and visits to selected countries where it would be possible to observe and collect feedback and data directly from readers and other community and government stakeholders in relation to a range of impact stories from different partners, may prove to be a more efficient and effective way of collecting and verifying impact stories.

These lessons will be paramount in gathering data for our end-of-strategy impact report in 2026, and we look forward to deepening our understanding of how sharing the power of books with communities worldwide is helping to create sustainable change.

With thanks to INTRAC and all of the partners who chose to share their stories with us.

¹<https://www.intrac.org/>

²Our work primarily impacts SDGs 3, 4 and 5. Find out more here: <https://bookaid.org/about-us/our-impact/>

³This number is calculated based on estimates of the numbers of people who can access reading spaces where we provide books.

⁴The Partner Development Programme (PDP) is a series of learning modules and interventions that together strengthen the capacity of partners to deliver projects funded by Book Aid International or others that partners identify.

⁵As defined by the World Bank in 2022

⁶*Growing Confidence in Ghana's Girls* - Ghana USAID (2016) Ghana 2015 Early Grade Reading Assessment and early Grade Mathematics Assessment: Report of Findings

⁷Ghana Education Fact Sheets 2020, Analysis for learning and equity using MICS data Mohammed, A. R. (2023) *Child marriage and education in the context of a global pandemic: Exploring the gendered implications of COVID-inspired school closure in Ghana*

⁸OCHA (2019) *Cameroon: North-West and South-West Regions IDPs and Returnees Factsheet*

Appendix: Our Theory of Change



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

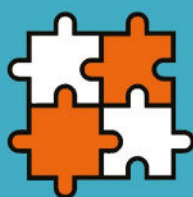


More people at all ages accessing books for pleasure, study and life-long learning



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



Equitable access

People facing the greatest barriers to reading and learning gaining the opportunity to read



Engagement with reading

People in marginalised communities actively engaged with books and reading



Support for books

People advocating for the potential of books to transform lives and working to make books available to all

Supporting our vision of a world where everyone has access to books that will enrich, improve and change their lives.