Fostering a culture of reading and writing

Examples of dynamic literate environments

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Selected case studies from
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Contents

Creating cultures of reading, writing and learning

The improvement of literacy is a concern globally, in every region of the world and in countries at every level of income. It is widely recognized as critical to the achievement of most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that comprise the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, progress with regard to the Education 2030 literacy target (SDG 4.6) – 'by 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy' – is only possible if those young people and adults who face literacy challenges are motivated to engage in learning. Available research evidence suggests that supportive economic, social and cultural environments are more likely to encourage people with literacy needs to enrol in literacy courses, to make use of a range of opportunities – including for continuing education – to use and further develop their skills, and to become independent and effective lifelong learners. This should fix the attention of policy-makers and programme providers on the need to develop rich and dynamic literate environments.

The promotion of literacy and the creation of literate environments are two sides of the same coin: Policies and strategies to achieve literacy and numeracy should ensure good-quality programmes for young people and adults alongside the development of rich literate environments. Such policies can include support for libraries, the provision of reading materials in local languages, book publishing, and access to opportunities to gain recognized adult basic education certificates and to use newly acquired skills in local socio-economic development activities. The generation of multiple opportunities for uses of literacy in relevant life spheres often acts as an enabler to 'hook' young people and adults into literacy learning. Consequently, efforts to enhance literate environments must be intersectoral in nature.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has advocated the creation of literate environments and the development of literate societies, communities and families for a long time. Advancing a culture of reading, writing and learning should be part of all literacy and lifelong learning strategies. This is about not only building supportive conditions but also identifying and removing impediments to literacy and learning. Furthermore, it is about the creation and use of spaces that bring learning closer to people's everyday lives, which is the central idea of the lifelong learning principle.

The examples of literacy programmes showcased and analysed in this publication confirm the critical role of literate environments. They have been selected from UNESCO's Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practises Database (LitBase), which UIL develops on a continuous basis. They demonstrate first and foremost how the development of literate environments can positively influence people's motivation to (re-)engage in literacy and learning and how they can practise their newly acquired skills in their daily activities to reach sustainable skills levels. In addition, they reveal successful strategies towards a culture of reading, writing and learning in the family, community or wider society. The examples reflect different contexts, such as families, libraries and prisons, to illustrate the potential of ICTs, intergenerational approaches, and community, mobile and prison libraries to engage young people and adults in literacy and learning.

Paving the way to the achievement of Education 2030 will be only possible to the extent that an enabling culture of reading and writing is nurtured. This requires the creation of truly literate environments. It is my hope that this publication contributes to a better understanding of the importance of dynamic literate environments and highlights a number of promising approaches. I firmly believe that the experiences shared in this compilation will be a valuable source of inspiration for literacy stakeholders, including policy-makers, programme providers, researchers and practitioners.

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2011–2017

Introduction

The achievement of ambitious literacy goals depends not only on good-quality literacy programmes, but also on the creation of opportunities and demand to use, improve and sustain (newly) acquired skills. This is particularly true in poor and disadvantaged communities. Even where such opportunities are available in the local context, their potential in supporting and reinforcing literacy learning is frequently insufficiently recognized or exploited. The importance of creating dynamic literate environments and of nurturing a culture of reading and writing needs to be much better understood.

Literacy and numeracy are at the core of basic education, and are an indispensable foundation of lifelong learning. In today's fast-changing world, everyone needs a wide set of competences, including literacy and numeracy, in order to participate in social, economic, cultural and civic life. In order to achieve literacy and numeracy at a level of proficiency that allows for such participation, they need to be practised and used in different domains. From a lifelong learning perspective, literacy and numeracy need to be applied on a continuous basis in order to sustain and further develop competences at more advanced levels.

The motivation of young people and adults to enrol and remain in literacy programmes that improve their reading, writing, numeracy and language skills is often taken for granted and not seen as a major issue. Those who struggle with literacy and numeracy skills usually face an array of other challenges in their lives. Some have to cope with negative educational experiences related to, for example, a failure to achieve the learning outcomes expected during the early grades, or to dropping (or being 'pushed') out of school. Others are too concerned with issues of day-to-day survival to appreciate literacy and education as a means of improving their lives and therefore fail to make them an immediate priority.

A rich literate environment is essential if young people and adults are to be encouraged to engage in literacy learning as a means of sustaining and integrating their newly acquired skills into their everyday lives. The social, cultural and material environments in which people live can be more or less supportive of and con-ducive to the practise and further development of literacy and numeracy.

The relationship between an individual's motivation to engage and remain in literacy learning and the quality and variety of his or her literate environments – at home, at work, in the community and in society as a whole – is reflected in an increasing emphasis on creating such environments as a key element of an effective literacy strategy.

DEFINING LITERATE ENVIRONMENTS

Early discussions on the need to provide newly literate adults with opportunities to apply their new skills centred on offering 'post-literacy' programmes and materials. As early as 1972, UNESCO recognized the need to promote:

> *the retention and development of abilities acquired in literacy classes. Such schemes are absolutely necessary, but in many cases they are not enough. More and more evidence seems to point to the fact that what may really account in large part for retention or loss of these abilities is the presence of something termed 'a literate environment'. A literate environment is one that not only offers the new literate opportunities to develop what he has already acquired, but also a social and psychological climate conducive to his doing so. It is an environment in which literacy is useful and everyone naturally wishes to attain literacy skills. (UNESCO, 1972, pp. 89–90)*

United Nations Literacy Decade Resolution 56/116, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2002, stated 'that literacy for all is at the heart of basic education for all and that creating literate environments and societies is essential for achieving the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy' (UNGA, 2002, p. 3). The 2006 Education for All Global Monitoring Report offered a more in-depth discussion of the topic of literate environments in the context of a broader understanding

of literacy and the need to strive for literate societies. Correspondingly, its recommendations prioritized:

> *focusing on literate societies, not just on literate individuals: It is very clear that the EFA goals can be met only through the development of literate societies, in which all literate individuals have the means and the opportunity to benefit from rich and dynamic literate environments. Policies to develop rich literate environments – alongside schooling and programmes that ensure that youth and adults become literate – are thus important. Such policies can include support for libraries, local-language newspapers, book publishing, access of adults to school libraries and radio listening groups.* (UNESCO, 2005, p. 249)

While the 2006 EFA Global Monitoring Report (EFA GMR), which was devoted to literacy, describes a 'rich literate environment' as a 'public or private milieu with abundant written documents' or 'communication and electronic media' (p. 421), the EFA GMRs from 2007 and 2008 further clarify the concept by differentiating between a) the availability of materials in learners' surroundings and b) the prevalence of literacy in households and communities, enhancing the prospects of successful literacy acquisition by learners (cited in Easton, 2014, p. 34).

However, to motivate youth and adults to apply their literacy and numeracy in order to maintain the skills levels that they have achieved and further enhance them, the development of a literate environment must go beyond making written materials available. Peter Easton has proposed four interrelated types of opportunity for ensuring the use of newly acquired skills, and for creating a sustainable demand for literacy (and numeracy) training:

1. Access to reading materials of direct interest to the neo-literate.
2. The availability of formal or non-formal continuing education (and training).
3. Opportunities to assume sustainable new functions in existing organizations or institutional structures.
4. Opportunities to start and help manage sustainable new business or non-profit endeavours that require and exercise literacy skills (Easton, 2009, pp. 311–312).

He states that '[i]t is the combination of all four, in forms and to degrees dictated by circumstances, human imagination and available resources, that constitutes a truly "literate environment" and creates a most durable demand for literacy training – "effective demand"' (ibid., pp. 311–312). In contrast to the traditional, supply-driven provision of literacy programming, this interpretation of 'literate environments' pays particular attention to the demand for literacy. This led UIL to formulate the following policy recommendation: 'The creation of an effective demand for literacy and a culture of learning supported by fertile and dynamic literate environments – also in local languages – should be a focus of literacy policies and strategies' (UIL, 2017a, p. 3). Here, the term 'literate environment' refers to contexts, conditions and opportunities that are particularly stimulating and supportive of the acquisition and use of literacy skills.

Strengthening emphasis on the demand side of a 'literate environment' entails linking literacy to economic, social and cultural activities that people want or need to develop in their daily lives, thereby creating requirements and opportunities for the use, improvement and retention of literacy skills to make them sustainable. With the development of literacy, numeracy and digital competences, related programmes attempt to integrate knowledge and skills (i.e. technical and vocational education and training, and other practical and 'life' skills) into areas of life covering livelihood, health, human rights, citizenship, gender equality and parenting (ibid.).

The following sections demonstrate the potential of dynamic literate environments by looking at four different contexts: digital environments, intergenerational settings, libraries and prisons. Each section analyses examples of promising literacy programmes that use, create, strengthen and support literate environments as part of their strategies to motivate learners and engage them in lifelong learning. They further examine these examples to better understand the role that contextual conditions can play and the kind of support that is required by learners to make literacy fully sustainable. Furthermore, the analysis explores how such programmes achieve the development of independent, confident and effective lifelong learners by developing a culture of reading, writing and learning.

A. THE USE OF ICTS TO STRENGTHEN MOTIVATION TO ENGAGE IN LITERACY LEARNING

Many of the tasks that people perform in their daily lives require using some sort of technology (e.g. mobile phones, tablets, computers, internet, email or social media). Adults often struggle with tasks that require skills related to information processing, problem-solving and the use of technology. At the same time, the use of ICTs often increases the motivation to engage in literacy and numeracy learning.

Increasingly, reading, writing, language and numeracy are viewed as part of a broader conception of key (or core) competences, including ICT skills, which require sustained learning and updating. With the implementation of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences (PIAAC), the use of ICT skills was introduced as a new element of direct testing, together with literacy (reading) and numeracy skills. Problem-solving in technology-rich environments, defined 'as the ability to use digital technology, communication tools and networks to acquire and evaluate information, communicate with others and perform practical tasks' (OECD, 2013, p. 59), includes the use of computers at various levels of proficiency.

The use of digital technology in adult literacy and learning programmes usually serves two major purposes: a) to acquire and develop digital competence and b) to support the teaching and learning of literacy, numeracy and language skills. This strongly motivates people to improve their literacy, numeracy and language skills, as well as to engage in learning digital skills, especially when an internet connection is available. However, ICTs' immense potential to enrich the literate environment also faces limitations. Internet access is restricted in many parts of the world, and even mobile phone coverage cannot be taken for granted in remote areas. Older generations frequently struggle to catch up with ICT use. In addition, a lack of literacy and education is commonly linked to poverty, which may restrict access to and efficient use of technologies that are often expensive. Providers of adult literacy programmes, particularly in poor countries, face challenges with regard to purchasing, maintaining and securely storing mobile devices, as well as with upskilling their teaching personnel to integrate these technologies effectively into the teaching and learning processes.

If literacy programmes can successfully address these and other difficulties, ICTs have the potential to contribute to raising literacy and numeracy levels by enhancing access and outreach, motivating learners to engage or re-engage in learning, improving the quality of teaching and learning, and boosting the possibilities for creating a culture of reading, writing and learning. This is demonstrated by a number of ICT-based literacy programmes featured in this collection, from which valuable lessons can be drawn.

MAKING ICTS AVAILABLE THROUGH RURAL LIBRARIES

In order to address education quality, the **Innovative Library Services for Vulnerable Children and Youth** (p. 45) offered by the Luboto Library Project (LLP) in **Zambia** offers quality educational opportunities for the country's children and youth through open-access libraries that provide carefully crafted book collections and holistic educational, cultural and community programmes. Established in 2005, LLP has built three public libraries that are free and open to the public, but are designed particularly for children and youth excluded from formal education, including those living on the streets and in extreme poverty. The activities offered by LLP include the LubutoLaptops programme. This provides children with access to One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) XO laptops to build their writing, typing and logical skills through the use of technology.

A second programme, LubutoLiteracy, is closely linked to LubutoLaptops. The underlying rationale for this programme is that people learn to read most effectively when they are taught in their mother tongue(s).

LLP identified the potential for a device provided by a technology company to be used for the multilingual oral translation of picture books. The device, known as a 'Sparkup', is paired with an English-language picture book; recordings are made in the Zambian languages and users have the option of switching between three different languages. Trial use of these Sparkup devices

in the libraries has demonstrated a high level of engagement and interest on the part of users, and research suggests that pairing audio and text plays a valuable role in assisting struggling and emergent readers.

The LLP faces further challenges because the necessary infrastructure is not always available. On the one hand, Lubuto libraries still do not have access to a reliable internet connection, which in turn limits the services and resources they can offer. On the other hand, they seek to reach the most disadvantaged communities, who have limited access to electricity and internet and typically do not benefit from technology-supported projects. Finding a suitable balance is proving challenging. LLP is thus drawing on the important lessons learned from its many years of experience. For example, it has found that many internationally donated resources (such as laptops) are neither as sustainable nor as flexible as those provided by local ICT institutions. As a result, it has decided to draw on local expertise and technology.

Motivating people living in marginalized rural communities to practise and develop their literacy skills is also the overall goal of the **Changing Lives in Central America through Access to Information and Literacy** programme (p. 122) implemented by the Riecken Foundation in **Honduras**. A network of 53 rural community libraries (and 12 more in Guatemala) is offering a rich literate environment that provides access to books, free internet and local democratic governance. Riecken's community libraries also aim to help bridge the digital divide in Central America.

In the communities it serves, a Riecken library often provides local people with their first hands-on experience with a computer. Library users gain new skills; they also become connected to one another, to ideas and to opportunities – powerful tools for improving their communities and strengthening their participation in the wider world. Where an internet connection is available, users can be found performing research, joining the world of online commerce, blogging and engaging in distance learning. The Riecken Network, a web-based portal available to libraries with access to the internet, links libraries electronically so that they can share ideas and help each other solve problems. The technology programme activities include practical computer and internet courses, and the use of soft-

ware aimed at young people. Teachers in some Riecken libraries are trained in the effective use of social networking and educational platforms (e.g. Khan Academy and WebQuest) while adhering to the standards laid down in the Ministry of Education's National Basic Curriculum. Efforts to provide internet services, badly needed replacements for outdated or broken computer equipment, and technology training for librarians are ongoing and costly. Through its website, the Riecken Foundation is raising funds (donations) to making free access to computers and the internet available in all of their libraries.

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF READING AND WRITING SUPPORTED BY MOBILE PHONES

The main aims of the **Reading and Writing for Pleasure** programme (p. 38), run by the FundZa Literacy Trust, are to inspire young people to read, and to foster a culture of reading and writing in **South Africa**. This non-profit organization targets young people aged 13–25 from low-income or under-resourced communities. FundZa focuses on the power of reading and writing for pleasure, rather than on curriculum-based academic support. This approach is supported by research that shows that reading for pleasure is associated with academic success, self-development and increased language development, and is thus one of the most important steps towards lifelong literacy.

FundZa offers four outreach programmes – Popularising Reading, Growing Communities of Readers, Developing Young Writers and Deepening Reading Practise – which are designed to: create a demand for reading; increase access to relevant reading content; motivate readers to practise their writing skills and exercise their creativity; and help readers to share content with others and encourage their friends, families and communities to join the programme. The Growing Communities of Readers programme uses mobile technology to deliver content: individual readers can access FundZa's 'library on phone' in a number of ways. FundZa also provides publishing space for young writers involved in the Developing Young Writers programme. In addition, FundZa uses technology to communicate with teachers, reading club facilitators and reading champions in the Popularising Reading programme. Group leaders monitor progress by completing monthly surveys using their mobile phones, tablets or computers.

Since very little local literature is made available to the general public through traditional publishing or book-selling channels, FundZa creates or commissions a large proportion of its reading content. At least once a month, one of its stories is translated into one of South Africa's local languages, thereby also helping readers to develop their language skills. FundZa places a great deal of emphasis on developing written communication skills. In addition to the Write4Life writing workshops on different topics, readers can submit their creative writing for publication in the 'Fanz' section of its 'mobi network'. FundZa provides writers with feedback on their work, and in the case of very talented young writers, it offers a mentorship programme that pairs them with professional authors to develop stories for the FundZa mobi network.

The key to FundZa's work is to provide materials that young people want to read (high-interest books and stories at no or low cost) that will develop their understanding of the world around them, and that exploit the most accessible media available (e.g. mobile phones) so as to engage as many young people as possible. One of the lessons learned has been that once readers get into the habit of reading, they want more and more content. Another lesson is that the more local and relevant content the programme can develop, the more able it is to meet its readers' needs. For example, the development of more non-fiction content could appeal to a larger male audience. However, additional funding will be required in order to increase FundZa's ability to supply a greater quantity (and diversity) of content.

Very often, family learning programmes – particularly those working through community libraries – have integrated ICTs as a means of increasing their attractiveness to their intended target group, extending their outreach or helping to bridge existing digital divides in society. Some programmes also use ICTs for public relations and communication, and to share their goals with practitioners or parents. ICTs are also employed for the production of learner-generated materials.

REACHING OUT TO FAMILIES THROUGH DIGITAL TOOLS AND INTERACTIVE GAMES

In the **Netherlands**, the **VoorleesExpress** programme (p. 79) has established a partnership with a provider of educational computer games for young children aged 3–7 and their parents and educators. Children learn by playing games and viewing picture books. These resources can be used at home, as well as in schools, kindergartens and libraries. While it is very important to encourage children to use real books, digital/animated picture books can be a good way of promoting reading and language development. Stories are digitized and brought to life using moving images, voices, sounds and music. Children comprehend the story more easily and learn new words and sentence structures as a result. The programme is also working to develop a mobile phone application that will give parents the possibility of sharing their experiences from home.

VoorleesExpress also makes use of ICTs for public relations purposes. Volunteers and families can contribute to the information provided on the programme website (www.voorleesexpress.nl). In addition, volunteers have access to an online community where they can share their experiences, ask questions and get information. The programme also has a Facebook page and Twitter feed, while project managers can access the VoorleesExpress intranet to order materials, purchase documents and contact one another.

Similarly, the **Bookstart** educational programme (p. 90), run by the United Kingdom's Booktrust, offers a range of online resources including, among others: recommended books (categorized according to age group); interactive games; an information-exchange platform for parents; a newsletter; a Facebook page; a Twitter feed; and information on local library services, events and activities (www.bookstart.org.uk).

The use and creation of e-books in the **eBooks and Family Literacy Programme** (p. 32), run by CODE-Ethiopia, represents a promising approach to addressing the lack of reading materials in rural areas and multilingual environments across **Ethiopia**. However, the use of ICTs (computers) involved in working with e-books also presents challenges. Community libraries do not have enough computers to meet demand. In addition, some do not have internet access and have to make do with digital copies of e-books saved to their computers. Power outages also make the use of computers challenging. Other difficulties relate to the one-week course offered to librarians: many are unable to acquire the necessary ICT skills in such a short space of time.

The use of ICTs and development of digital skills also play a role in creating literate environments within the prison context. For example, the government-run **Prison Education Programmes for Young People and Adults** (p. 141) in **Uruguay** included two ICT-supported projects. One was the installation and use of a computer chess game. The other was the construction of a carnival project website for participants' families, aimed primarily at their children and featuring poems and letters written by prisoners, and the production of a CD with lyrics and illustrations provided by the group. The learning experience, along with the feelings of empowerment and accomplishment supported by the project, had a high emotional impact on everyone involved. In other words, project activities contributed to strengthening sustainable demand for literacy and learning among inmates.

All of these examples show that the use of ICTs and the development of digital competences have a great potential to motivate young people and adults to engage in literacy and learning. While a number of issues and challenges exist, particularly in the context of the Global South, useful lessons have been learned and promising approaches identified that can successfully address these difficulties. The use of ICTs can contribute towards closing the digital divide, particularly in rural areas and among disadvantaged communities. In poorly resourced rural and multilingual contexts, in particular, the use of digital devices to translate and produce reading material is helping to enrich literate environments. However, demand often outstrips the available supply of computers. Community organizations, such as libraries, can provide practical solutions by sharing digital devices and providing free access to online resources.

Mobile technologies appear to attract younger people in particular, provided that the content on offer resonates with their lives (e.g. stories about teen pregnancy, gangs, xenophobia, homophobia, bullying, etc.). Interactive elements seem to boost motivation still further by creating platforms for users to exchange, debate and share their own writing. Being part of a network and a user community is inspiring (young) people and increasing the perceived value of reading and writing for pleasure.

Over time, most of the ICT-supported programmes have diversified, varying their components in order to respond to a range of needs and interests. Partnerships and coordination efforts with other providers, institutions and private companies have also been enabling factors in helping these programmes become sustainable and increase their outreach. In other cases, websites have developed into open-access platforms that not only support face-to-face programme participants and facilitators, but also enable the general public to make use of the materials and learning resources on offer.

B. THE POTENTIAL OF INTERGENERATIONAL APPROACHES TO CREATE A CULTURE OF READING AND LEARNING AMONG DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES

Family literacy and family learning are approaches to learning that focus on intergenerational interactions within families and communities. This, in turn, promotes the development of literacy, numeracy, language, digital and life skills. Family learning recognizes the vital role that parents, grandparents and other caregivers play in children's education. Furthermore, it values and supports all forms of learning in homes and communities. The early years from birth to age two are essential for building strong foundations for learning. Several studies highlight the significant correlation between the culture of literacy within a family and children's acquisition of literacy skills (Hanemann, 2014; UIL, 2017b). In addition, the risk of school failure and drop-out is lower when parents participate actively in learning activities with their children. Adult education and literacy skills should therefore be enhanced, not only to respond to adults' needs, but also to enable parents to be more involved in the educational experiences of their children.

Very often, the desire to help children prepare to start school or complete their schoolwork motivates parents and caregivers to re-engage in learning themselves and improve their own literacy, numeracy, language and other basic skills. Among disadvantaged families and communities in particular, a family literacy and learning approach is more likely to break the intergenerational cycle of low education and literacy skills. It is also more likely to nurture a culture of learning than

fragmented and isolated measures at the individual level. In sum, intergenerational approaches to literacy and learning offer opportunities for adults and children to engage in lifelong learning.

The UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Reports (EFA, 2000–2015) reveal that EFA Goal 1 on early childhood care and education (ECCE) and Goal 4 on youth and adult literacy have been the most neglected of the EFA goals. While the consequences (i.e. a lack of progress in the areas of ECCE and adult literacy) have been more visible in countries of the Global South, they may also be detected in the Global North. The examples below show how an intergenerational approach to literacy and learning can provide practical ways of redressing a lack of reading habits among disadvantaged and migrant communities, as well as a lack of age-specific and easy-to-read books. Often, educational systems fail to provide quality ECCE opportunities, which particularly affects marginalized families.

In the **UK**, for example, numerous challenges impede the provision and expansion of ECCE, including reductions in state childcare support and the fact that pre-primary school places are only free for 4-year-olds, while funding for 3-year-olds is at the discretion of local education authorities, which are the responsible bodies for providing state education to pupils in their areas. These challenges have, in turn, created national inequalities with regard to access to ECCE: children in poor municipalities who come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds – such as migrant families – have limited access to quality pre-school education.

ENCOURAGING A LOVE FOR READING IN FAMILIES THROUGH BOOK-GIFTING

In 1992, in an effort to address these fundamental challenges, create quality ECCE opportunities for all children and empower parents and caregivers to be proactive and effective educators, BookTrust UK – an independent educational NGO founded in 1921 – launched the Bookstart education programme.

Bookstart is an integrated and intergenerational home-based early childhood education and development programme that is implemented countrywide and targets pre-school children, and their parents or caregivers. It reaches more than 2.5 million children every year.

Its aim is to nurture a culture of home-based learning by encouraging parents and caregivers to share/read books, stories and rhymes with their children from as early an age as possible. BookTrust provides families with a variety of age-specific thematic learning resources that seek to enhance children's psychosocial, cognitive, language and literacy skills development by encouraging them to use their imagination and curiosity to explore the world around them. The programme implementation is heavily dependent on parents and caregivers, and therefore endeavours to empower them to be effective educators. BookTrust works closely with local library staff, health visiting teams and local ECCE practitioners to support parents and caregivers in their efforts to encourage the reading habit.

In addition to free book packs for children from different age and ability groups, BookTrust provides family teaching and guidance manuals for parents and caregivers. Although these are mostly procured at a low cost or as gifts from BookTrust's long-standing partners (e.g. public libraries, book-sellers, publishing houses), BookTrust is solely responsible for selecting books and other learning resources. This is to guarantee quality and relevance, and ensure that the programme is not usurped for commercial or political purposes.

Impact studies have revealed that Bookstart helps to develop a sustained love of books, which in turn provides a crucial foundation for successful long-term learning. A further study shows that Bookstart is a low-cost early learning intervention of significant social value to parents, children and the state. In light of its significant impact in the UK, more than 30 countries across the world have adopted Bookstart and now distribute free books to families with babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

In 2013, the **USA** adopted the Strong Start for America's Children Act (Committee on Education and the Workforce Democrats, 2013), which aims to promote high-quality early childhood education as a means of fostering success in school and motivating parents to support their children in the acquisition of basic skills. The non-profit family literacy programme, **Reach Out and Read** (ROR) (p. 107) was established in 1989 and primarily addresses families from socio-economically disadvantaged or migrant backgrounds, and aims to

contribute towards improving primary education in the USA. Enabling young people to function in society, ROR also promotes family interactions through access to and use of books, using medical services as the entry point. Founded by medical personnel from a Boston hospital, the programme initially focused only on providing books for paediatric waiting rooms. Since then it has grown, and today integrates books into the regular cycle of check-ups for children aged 6 months to 5 years. In the course of each visit, families are given one new book that is both culturally and age appropriate; in this way, they build up a home library of at least 10 books before the child enters school. Because of the trust inherent in the doctor-patient relationship, parents from vulnerable backgrounds are more likely to act on the advice they have received to incorporate books and reading aloud into their daily family lives. The strength of this programme, which works through a network of medical providers, is its broad outreach, enabling paediatricians to reach large numbers of children and families. In the course of just one year, for example, 20,000 medical providers distributed 6.5 million books to 4 million children across the country (Jones et al., 2000).

PROMOTING LITERACY AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN MIGRANT FAMILIES

Migrants in **Switzerland** face multiple disadvantages in the Swiss educational system. Children from a migrant background are less likely to have access to pre-school education, are more likely to attend lower-tier secondary schools, and are under-represented among college graduates. This can be attributed mainly to language barriers, parents' more limited financial resources, and the lower rate of parental involvement in children's education among these groups (20 Minuten, 2011; Becker, 2010). The family literacy programme **Schenk Mir eine Geschichte** (Tell Me a Story) (p. 84) seeks to overcome language barriers and increase parental involvement by reaching out to families from migrant backgrounds in an effort to improve children's language and literacy development in their native language.

To achieve this, the programme provides storytelling courses to families from migrant backgrounds. These courses seek to group families from the same language background. During the course sessions, facilitators tell and read stories, and encourage parents and

caregivers to participate in games and other activities related to the story. Participants are also encouraged to write, draw or orally present their own stories. In addition, facilitators introduce parents and caregivers to the literacy resources available to them. The focus is mainly on familiarizing them with library services in the community. Parents also receive guidance on how to support their children's literacy and (bilingual) language development within the family. In this way, the programme has succeeded not only in promoting intergenerational learning, but also in strengthening parents' self-confidence and motivation to engage in their children's literacy and language development.

The Swiss provider of this family literacy programme (Schweizerisches Institut für Kinder und Jugendmedien [SIKJM]) has shared a number of important lessons to ensure that programmes achieve their expected results and are sustainable in the longer term. These include the need for a well-defined concept with a clear methodology, as well as ongoing coaching and support for facilitators. These facilitators, who are ideally well-integrated into the (migrant) community, play a key role in establishing a bond of trust with parents. This, in turn, is a precondition for embedding transformative learning practises, dynamics and habits within families in the long term.

In the **Netherlands**, one in seven pupils fails to achieve a satisfactory reading level by the end of Year 3 of his or her primary education. Thirty-five per cent of adults without literacy skills have completed primary school, while 26 per cent have a secondary school diploma. The risk of illiteracy is higher among women, low-skilled workers, older adults, first-generation immigrants and unemployed people. Reading problems disproportionately affect children from socio-economically and/or educationally disadvantaged families. What children learn about the written language depends on how it is used in their regular daily activities and what interactions accompany these activities. It was in response to this problem that the SodaProducties foundation initiated the **VoorleesExpress** programme in 2006. The programme targets both immigrant and native (Dutch) families with low literacy levels, with the aim of enriching the home literacy environment by involving all family members in language and literacy learning activities.

VorleesExpress works through a network of volunteers, in partnership with other organizations that promote reading, and uses a number of approaches to encourage reading and improve language development. Like the previous two programmes from the UK and Switzerland, the Dutch programme assigns parents and caregivers a central role in the process of helping children to enjoy reading. The books used in reading sessions are borrowed from local libraries. Parents (who must be present during the sessions) receive two important resources: a free library card giving them access to books and a 'reading diary'. The latter serves as a personal reading journal for each child and is circulated among family members, volunteer readers and school teachers, who can add details of the books that a child has read, methods that have worked well, and any other relevant information or suggestions for enhancing the child's language and literacy development.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL CULTURE THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

In **Ethiopia**, a large proportion of the population still faces literacy challenges, particularly in rural areas and among women (Shenkut, 2005). This has been compounded by the low levels of financial and material resources available for delivering recent education reforms. Many schools are poorly equipped, lack reading rooms and libraries, and have limited access to books that are often outdated or ill-suited to students' age or skills levels (CODE-Ethiopia, 2015). According to a recent survey, almost half of Ethiopian fathers and a third of mothers have completed primary school, while a significant proportion (45 per cent of fathers and 73 per cent of mothers) have no education (Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, 2015). For this reason, CODE-Ethiopia, a local non-profit, non-governmental organization, established the **eBooks and Family Literacy Programme** (eBFLP).

The overall aim of the eBFLP programme is to promote reading, as well as critical and creative thinking, among families in rural Ethiopia through activities that can support whole-family literacy as well as literacy development at pre-school age. The programme works through community libraries with librarians as facilitators. For the pilot project, local writers and illustrators were contracted to develop six e-books. These digital

versions of books can be accessed online or by computer and other ICT tools. Alternatively, they can be freely downloaded, printed and used offline. This accessibility is particularly relevant in a multilingual context such as Ethiopia, where books in local languages are scarce.

A series of 11 family literacy sessions targets both parents and pre-school children. Every e-book includes a list of suggested activities for librarians, to help them to conduct sessions effectively. During a typical session, the librarian might read an e-book aloud to participants and incorporate modelling activities that parents can use when reading with their children at home. At the end of each session, the librarian gives the families a printed copy of the book, and asks them to complete a task at home before the following session. While initial sessions are dedicated to reading the six e-books, the last three sessions allow participants to create two e-books of their own.

The intergenerational approach has helped to fulfil the main aim of community libraries: to be a shared space rather than a simple reading room; a space where people can gather, learn together and develop networks to improve their personal lives and/or strengthen the community. One of the lessons shared by CODE-Ethiopia is that reading and writing together is not only a means of enhancing language and literacy skills, it also builds a sense of community among those who share a common story and space. Reading aloud is not reserved for young children alone: adults and older children similarly enjoy listening to someone reading to a group. Each new e-book that is created enriches the library's collection and the experience of its users by recounting a meaningful story that is grounded in the community's values, traditions and memories.

Nepal has a rich historical and cultural heritage. For centuries, its history has been transmitted orally from generation to generation, passing on stories about culture, livelihoods and the natural environment. Yet the modernization and globalization of Nepalese society have caused this practise to decline. Stories are forgotten, traditional dances blend with more modern ones, and local histories are lost. To preserve the endangered oral heritage of rural communities, Rural Education and Development (READ) Nepal developed a project called

My Grandparents' Stories, My Pictures (p. 57), which was implemented in five READ Community Library and Resource Centres across the country. Elders from five communities were selected for the project because of their extensive knowledge of historical events and endangered cultural practises. They participated in workshops on storytelling led by the Nepalese Society for Children's Literature. Following this, groups of local children were invited to the READ centres to hear the elders tell their stories. The children created a written record of these stories, which they then illustrated. Five storybooks were published and presented to the community libraries. The communities also developed theatre programmes to act out the stories.

This experience of intergenerational learning contributed to the promotion of knowledge-sharing, creative story-writing, a culture of reading, and the preservation of cultural heritage. It furthermore helped to strengthen cross-generational bonds and increase community engagement in library activities. Although there were many stories in the community, older people who enjoyed sharing stories with the younger generation lacked the time and opportunities to do so. When the READ Nepal project took action to redress this lack, it became apparent that children were highly motivated not only to listen to the stories, but also to write them down and illustrate them to create storybooks.

The aforementioned programme examples show that intergenerational approaches to literacy and learning are intrinsically linked to children's and adults' need or desire to improve and use their reading and writing skills. Whatever their reasons – be it to support a child's early development and school attainment, learn a second language, gain computer skills, or read and write on topics connected to family and community history, culture and events – all of these can motivate people to (re-)engage in learning and nurture the development of a culture of reading, writing and learning at home, at school and in the community.

While the provision of accessible reading materials is crucial, particularly in rural areas and multilingual contexts, this alone is not enough to create a sustainable demand for literacy and learning. Designing activities that motivate and stimulate learners (e.g. through the production of learner-generated materials) is as impor-

tant as ensuring that these activities are interactive and foster a sense of community. Intergenerational approaches to literacy and learning have the potential to enhance literate environments by taking into consideration the bonds, emotions, relationships of trust and mutual support that characterize the family unit. Learning together as a family creates an intergenerational environment of mutual encouragement and aspiration that can have a positive and long-term impact on learning cultures, habits, motivations, attitudes and patterns. Such an environment enables adults, youth and children to become independent, proactive and lifelong learners.

C. THE POTENTIAL OF LIBRARIES TO PROVIDE LITERATE ENVIRONMENTS

Literacy skills are best developed and enhanced through access to a wide range of interesting and relevant materials and literacy opportunities. And at every stage of life, continuous practise is needed to foster literacy skills. However, most individuals, families, schools and workplaces do not have the means to provide these materials and opportunities. Libraries are a practical and cost-effective way of sharing often limited resources with people of all ages and literacy levels. Almost every country has a network of libraries: there are around 320,000 public libraries worldwide, of which about 230,000 are located in developing and transitioning countries. In addition, there are more than a million school, community, research, university, national and specialist libraries operating across the globe (IFLA, 2016).

Libraries are well-suited to supporting a reading culture, as well as to creating and sustaining a literate environment, as they offer a welcoming and friendly space to discover, enjoy and practise various literacy-related activities. Based on democratic values, they help to bridge the information gap by providing equitable and free access to relevant documents, information and knowledge, including ICTs and the internet, in particular (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011). They also furnish and support the digital skills needed to participate in today's information societies by providing access to computer hardware and assistance in using it.

Furthermore, libraries are trusted institutions: in many cases, they are located at the heart of the community

and have been working successfully with local inhabitants for decades. Libraries are also ideal places to break the intergenerational cycle of low education and literacy skills by offering family literacy and intergenerational activities. By using the library with their children, parents and caregivers set a good example, motivate young people to read, and help to establish a pattern of lifelong learning. Libraries have a long-established commitment to providing services to the most vulnerable and reaching out to marginalized groups, such as prisoners, the visually impaired, migrants, housebound people, homeless people and hospital patients. They also support youth and adults with low literacy skills by offering reading materials specially tailored to people with lower-level proficiency (UIL, 2016). In multi-ethnic and multilingual societies, libraries can provide access to – and even create – materials for different ethnic and language groups.

Unfortunately, in communities facing significant literacy challenges and development needs across all age groups, libraries can often be poorly resourced or non-existent. Once established, however, they have the ability to greatly benefit people with little formal education by providing access to reading materials and offering literacy training. They can also create a demand for newly acquired literacy skills by linking literacy activities to practical livelihood concerns, for example, by hosting microcredit groups; providing training in entrepreneurship and other life skills; creating local reading materials; and assisting in locating relevant needs-based information on health, agriculture and other development-related concerns (UIL, 2016).

The following examples highlight two specific library formats that focus on reaching out to marginalized populations with little or no access to literacy materials: community libraries and mobile libraries.

COMMUNITY LIBRARIES SERVING LOCAL LITERACY NEEDS

From the 1970s on, alternative library models started to emerge in marginalized regions and environments with no public funding for libraries. Local people started to set up their own libraries, often referred to as 'community libraries' since they are developed, owned and managed by and for a specific community. Compared to public libraries, community libraries tend to be small and are not usually supported by government funds. They not only target people who can read, but also recognize and serve diverse community interests and demands, with a special focus on meeting the needs of rural populations, the poor and neo-literates (Shrestha and Krolak, 2015, pp. 403). In the words of Marlene Asselin and Ray Doiron, they 'seek the lofty goals of transforming their communities into ones that respect all members, provide equal access to their programs/services and commit to equity and social justice for all' (Asselin and Doiron, 2013, p. 137). Community libraries provide various learning opportunities for community development and to enable people to improve their quality of life. While some are set up by schools, churches or community groups, the needs of the wider community remain of the utmost importance. As shared learning spaces, community libraries host campaigns and activities that accommodate and bring together a wide range of people with different literacy levels. They are flexible and proactive facilities that value local cultures and preserve indigenous knowledge, thus establishing a long-standing bond of trust with the local community (Shrestha and Krolak, 2015, pp. 403–404).

In 1991, the **Community Library and Resource Centres** (CLRC) programme (p. 52) was instituted in **Nepal** by READ Nepal in response to the country's severe socio-economic challenges. These included poverty, poor access to quality education, gender inequality and underdevelopment. To date, more than 66 CLRCs have been established, some of which have over 9,000 books and various other learning materials. To guarantee their financial sustainability, each CLRC runs an income-generating project. The CLRCs represent an effort to empower socially disadvantaged and marginalized rural communities, and serve as focal points for the implementation of community-based education and development projects. They play a leading role in empowering women in the community by providing a space for women to interact and discuss issues, and by conducting programmes tailored to their specific needs. Furthermore, CLRCs provide early childhood education, literacy/education classes for youths and adults, and vocational skills training. The programme fosters a culture of intergenerational learning and has assisted community members in establishing savings and loan clubs, as well as a variety of income-gener-

ating projects. CLRCs have successfully evolved from traditional libraries into community development centres with a strong focus on social empowerment, economic development and lifelong learning, based on a concept that is needs-based, community-owned and sustainable. However, CLRCs have also encountered challenges, and their limited capacity to provide effective literacy programmes means that the centres have not always been able to meet community members' high expectations.

In **Honduras**, a similar community library model has been developed to address low literacy levels in marginalized communities as well as educational inequality. Founded in 2000, the Riecken Foundation's **Changing Lives in Central America through Access to Information and Literacy** project (p. 122) creates rich literate environments in local communities. By 2015, there were 65 Riecken community libraries across rural farming communities in Guatemala and Honduras. Each library contains more than a thousand books and offers free access to the internet. The libraries are run in accordance with the principles of local democratic governance. Riecken's approach is to develop modern and inclusive community libraries that play a wider role in the community than more traditional libraries. By involving people from all social backgrounds, Riecken community libraries promote access to essential knowledge, the development of critical thinking skills, and a commitment to lifelong learning and self-education. They focus on four areas: citizen competencies; computer skills; local development; and associate development. Building a literate environment helps to transform community members into active citizens who participate in local and national development initiatives. The libraries offer a variety of reading programmes and literacy courses, and engage people of all ages. For example, indigenous elders tell children stories, which are then transcribed and translated into Spanish in order to keep local traditions and history alive. The programme has met with success. It has improved reading and writing skills and resulted in children spending more time on their homework, while many library users have been able to find new job and training opportunities. It has also changed attitudes towards reading by transforming it from a chore into an enjoyable activity. However, the libraries face ongoing challenges, often failing to meet demand

due to insufficient resources and the limited training available to librarians.

In 2005, **Innovative Library Services for Vulnerable Children and Youth**, run by the Lubuto Library Project (LLP), was established in **Zambia** to provide vulnerable children and youth with opportunities to develop knowledge and skills that would allow them to reconnect with their cultures and communities, and to empower them to participate fully in society. LLP draws on local expertise, technology and materials to build its libraries. Designs are modified continuously to ensure that they meet users' needs. Libraries comprise three buildings designed both to reflect traditional Zambian architecture and to preserve and restore Zambia's cultures and languages by providing spaces for performances, social gatherings, storytelling sessions, drama activities, writing workshops, art programmes, and so on. LLP has had a huge and positive impact on the children and young people who have taken part in its programmes, improving their reading skills, confidence, social skills, classroom performance and social engagement. Schools have also benefited as they can bring their classes to one of the libraries and use the resources there to supplement classroom teaching. However, there are challenges in replicating the model in places where the necessary infrastructure is not always available.

In contrast to the three examples above, **Viet Nam** is a country with an existing network of public libraries and good overall levels of literacy. The government is committed to building a lifelong learning society by 2020. One of its targets is to promote a reading culture among its citizens. However, even though the country's libraries and reading rooms are free and open to the public, with long opening hours, the take-up rate for this service appears to be low. According to a survey, Vietnamese people read fewer than one book a year on average, textbooks excluded. Establishing a culture of reading and writing is a challenge. The **Books for Rural Areas of Viet Nam** initiative (p. 68), currently run by the Centre for Knowledge Assistance and Community Development, was launched in 1997 as a means of establishing a network of civic libraries that would increase access to books and encourage reading habits. By 2016, more than 9,000 civic libraries had opened. They differ from public libraries because they are funded by mobilizing com-

munity resources, and managed by community members or volunteers. Their specific remit is to increase the availability and accessibility of books for readers living in rural and mountainous areas. As well as providing access to reading materials, the libraries organize interactive reading activities (e.g. book presentations, discussions and reading competitions), in which readers can participate to strengthen their literacy skills. To address the specific needs of the various target groups, five different library models were developed: clan libraries; parish libraries; parent-funded libraries; army libraries; and community libraries. The programme has significantly improved reading habits in some schools, encouraging pupils to read for 15–30 minutes per day at school and 30–60 minutes per day at home. There have also been positive signs that attitudes are shifting towards ensuring that children have the time and opportunity to read. Despite these achievements, strengthening reading habits within communities remains a challenge due to the time constraints imposed by the large amount of homework that students must complete and the busy schedules of many adults.

MOBILE LIBRARIES REACHING OUT TO MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Traditionally, libraries are fundamentally committed to social inclusion and have always looked for alternative, innovative and creative ways of addressing community needs and reaching disadvantaged and marginalized groups. For people who live far away from the next library or in regions with no functional library, mobile libraries can fill the gap. They can play an important role in creating a literate environment and promoting a culture of reading and writing in areas without an easily accessible library service. In remote areas and in places that are 'cut off' from normal life, such as prisons and hospitals, mobile libraries can represent the only point of access to constantly changing literacy materials. In most countries, a library bus serves various communities, schools and other institutions. In addition, there are many examples of books and supplementary reading materials being delivered to excluded communities by other means as a practical and cost-effective way of creating literate environments: for example, by donkey (in Zimbabwe and Columbia), by camel and motorbike (in Kenya), by elephant (in India) and by boat (in Benin and Argentina) (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011).

In 2013, the BUNYAD Literacy Community Council (BLCC), a national NGO in **Pakistan**, launched the **Adult Female Functional Literacy Programme** (AFFLP) (p. 63). This was done to increase access to reading materials in a country with low levels of literacy, particularly among women. By August 2016, three mobile rickshaw libraries were providing fortnightly deliveries of 350–400 books to selected rural districts. Some of the materials were developed by BUNYAD to address specific community needs and interests. The initiative serves students from public and private schools, teachers, members of school councils and other community members, with the aim of boosting student retention rates, promoting good reading habits, and empowering women through the provision of relevant literature and information. A unique feature of the mobile rickshaw libraries is that they are equipped with laptops and multimedia screens that permit users to access online materials. In areas with no internet access, BUNYAD downloads and saves content to CDs that learners can load using the laptops provided. The initiative has helped students, young adults and women in particular to acquire literacy skills and gain knowledge and competences related to livestock; agriculture; local culture (e.g. traditional stories); maternal, newborn and child health; and finance. Project results point to an increase in participants' interest in reading, learning and independently searching for information. Women have reinforced their decision-making and resource management skills. In addition, community members have been mobilized to raise awareness of the importance of education and knowledge, as well as to build community spaces for information-sharing and discussion. In implementing the project, the BLCC faced a number of challenges related to conservative traditions, religious beliefs and family responsibilities that limit the use of their facilities. However, it has taken steps to ensure its sustainability by making community citizens' boards responsible for initiating and implementing activities, and for fundraising.

In response to the significant school drop-out rate, low literacy levels and a lack of training and education for young prisoners in **Nicaragua**, the **Bibliobús Bertolt Brecht and the German-Nicaraguan Library** (p. 132) has been in service since 1987. The project was started by a retired German librarian and is now run by the German NGO, Pan y Arte e.V. The Bibliobús

travels to a variety of rural villages, schools, factories and institutions, including several prisons. Its services offer prisoners a vital opportunity to develop their literacy skills and attitudes during their time behind bars. Children, youth and adults have benefited from having access to attractive books and materials, and the scheme fosters an enjoyment of reading, cultivates good reading habits and helps schoolchildren with their homework. It compensates for a lack of books in school classrooms and the home environment. However, it has also faced challenges, such as an initial misunderstanding that led users to assume that the books were being distributed as gifts. Nonetheless, the future for the programme is assured thanks to continuous financial support from donors and ongoing support from local communities, who consider the library service to be flexible, demand-oriented and in line with the educational and recreational needs of its users.

All of these examples demonstrate the need to ensure that libraries serve as proactive community spaces that directly address the needs of children, youth and adults. The key to making a library a successful literate environment is the librarians´ ability to collect and make accessible relevant and appropriate print and online materials, and to make the library a welcoming and interesting place to visit regularly. Merely providing a collection of well-organized materials will only reach community members who are already interested in using the library. The challenge is to reach out proactively to the rest of the community, for example by delivering appropriate reading and literacy materials to classrooms, families, workplaces and other community locations. Another option is for libraries to host creative and attractive programmes, such as reading and writing competitions; book clubs; author readings; creative writing classes; summer reading programmes; study support groups; discussion groups; celebrations and festivals; exhibitions; and storytelling sessions. Such programmes can also attract adults with low literacy levels who may have negative memories of formal schooling, encouraging them to visit the library and take their first steps back into learning (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011).

D. PROMOTING A CULTURE OF READING AND WRITING IN PRISONS

'Around the world prisons are in crisis. The number of people incarcerated is growing, rates of re-offending remain high and too many prisons are dangerously under-resourced. Too often it is the poorest, least educated and most vulnerable people who find themselves in prison' (APP, 2017, p. 2). Prison inmates often have limited levels of education and come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Many do not hold a school-leaving certificate or performed poorly in school. The proportion of men, women and youths who have problems with reading and writing is significantly higher than in the rest of society (Czerwinski, König and Zaichenko, 2014, p. 5). As a result, there is an urgent need to equip prisons with spaces that facilitate lifelong learning, particularly with regard to literacy skills. If we fail to address the lack of foundational skills, there is a danger of perpetuating existing socio-economic inequalities, which could delay or even prevent prisoners' rehabilitation and reintegration into society, resulting in higher reoffending rates.

The Council of Europe sets out three main functions for prison education: 'Firstly, prison is by its very nature abnormal, and destructive of the personality in a number of ways. Education has, among other elements in the prison system, the capacity to render this situation less abnormal, to limit somewhat the damage done to men and women through imprisonment. Secondly, there is an argument based on justice: a high proportion of prisoners have had very limited and negative past educational experience, so that, on the basis of equality of opportunity, they are not entitled to special support to allow their educational disadvantage to be redressed. A third argument that may be put forward is the rehabilitative one: education has the capacity to encourage and help those who try to turn away from crime' (Council of Europe, 1990, p. 9–10).

The consensus is that every person has a right to education, including prisoners. The case studies in this section support existing research which suggests a clear correlation between crime, poverty, violence and educational disadvantage (Lee and Rowe, 2014). Promoting a culture of reading and writing among inmates is an effective way of helping to break this cycle of disadvantage, offering them:

- education, training and lifelong learning opportunities;
- entertainment and recreational activities;
- access to legal information;
- a means of escaping their daily worries;
- opportunities for personal development and empowerment;
- stress relief mechanisms;
- skills enabling them to fill out forms, make requests and write letters in prison;
- job opportunities in prison;
- increased self-reflection, inspiration and self-esteem;
- access to culture and links to the outside world;
- the chance to socialize and bond with family and friends.

This chapter highlights a range of literacy practises that are being implemented in the prison context. As it is difficult to present a balanced overview of countries' practises, it focuses on a limited number of literacy programmes, looking at formal and non-formal literacy opportunities, prison library services that support the creation of a literate environment, and the benefits of involving family members in prison literacy provisions.

CREATING READING AND WRITING OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN LITERACY IN PRISONS

Many prisons provide their inmates with the opportunity to obtain certificates of education, be it through classes taught in prison or via self-learning or distance learning modalities. However, as the following examples show, there are also creative and innovative ways of integrating literacy learning opportunities into non-formal learning activities.

In the **United States of America**, a large proportion of inmates (50–60 per cent) have not completed high school (Lehmann, 2011, p. 495). Research by the Campaign for Youth Justice suggests that, every year, as many as 200,000 young people under the age of 18 are prosecuted as adults and placed in adult jails across the USA. The vast majority of these young people are African Americans or Latinos. As many as 57 per cent of incarcerated young people aged between 16 and 24 are

functionally illiterate and have had limited engagement with school due to the fact that they have spent some of their formative years behind bars. Once released, they re-enter society with little formal education and few job skills, not to mention untreated trauma stemming from their childhoods and adolescent years in prison. Young people in the adult criminal justice system are at a substantially higher risk of assault and suicide, and are likely to reoffend in the year following their release. In Washington DC, teenagers who are incarcerated typically come from the city's most impoverished and crime-stricken communities.

The **Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop** (p. 99) is a non-profit organization founded in 2002 and based in Washington DC. It started as a book club and poetry workshop targeting young offenders between the ages of 15 and 17. The programme is facilitated by trained staff and covers areas such as creative writing, job readiness training and violence prevention. Its objective is to develop inmates' personal skills and education level, and to ease their way into life after their release. Participants often report having had bad experiences of reading books at school, as the content of those books was not relevant to their lives. Hence, the club's aim is to provide books and materials that are relevant to and resonate with beneficiaries' lives. In some cases, the books' characters have experienced similar things, which makes the stories more relatable for the prisoners and promotes self-reflection. As part of the programme, members' poetry is typed out and included in the organization's regular newsletter or submitted to an alternative publication. Many Free Minds members report that they did not believe that they could write until they saw their poems in print for the first time.

An important feature of the programme is the continuous support it offers inmates, both during their transfer to and time in prison, and after their release. During the latter stage, the Re-entry Book Club provides: mentoring; month-long, paid job-readiness apprenticeships; and life skills workshops. This allows former offenders to gain a combination of theoretical knowledge (through classes that teach them communication and CV-writing skills) and practical, on-the-job experience (by working at contracting companies run by former prisoners). The Free Minds Book Club follows up with them on a regular basis and often

connects them to potential employers. Data on the programme's achievements suggest that when participants enter the programme, only 5 per cent enjoy reading and writing. After finishing the programme, 75 per cent refer to themselves as active readers and 90 per cent as active writers. The programme faces a number of challenges, including space limitations for classes; a lack of youth-oriented services in the adult criminal justice system; and the difficulty of providing adequate support for people suffering from Post-Incarceration Syndrome. Overall, however, the programme has been judged to be broadly successful, and in 2015, the recidivism rate registered by Free Minds was 10 per cent for juveniles charged as adults, compared to the national rate of 70–90 per cent.

While this programme focuses primarily on reading and writing, others, such as the **Prison Education Programmes for Young People and Adults** (p. 141) in **Uruguay**, weave literacy skills training into non-formal educational activities. In 2007, a study revealed that 40 per cent of prisoners had not completed primary education, while 31 per cent had completed it but subsequently left the education system. The project was started as a means of addressing the educational needs of such prisoners. Its main aims include extending educational coverage to every prison; ensuring education promotes self-reliance and autonomy for reintegration into society; and allowing prisoners' sentences to be reduced if they enrol in a course of study. The programme utilizes both formal and non-formal teaching approaches, offering inmates the opportunity to attend literacy classes, continue with primary or secondary education, access vocational training, and take part in workshops, theatre groups and so on. One of the projects adopted the Uruguayan Carnival as its central theme, based on prisoners' interests. In carrying out the project, literacy and self-directed learning were woven into the curriculum, addressing topics such as the social self and the social environment; language development and communication; art and culture (music groups and carnival festivities); and historical and geographical studies of similar cultural phenomena. The project was extremely successful, as demonstrated by the high rate of participation among prisoners. It also led to the construction of a website for prisoners' families, through which they could share poems, letters, audio recordings and illustrations.

Considering other sources documenting successful practises not featured in this publication, we find that certain literacy programmes appear to go beyond the 'mere purpose' of educating inmates and reducing recidivism: completing these programmes can, in fact, contribute to reducing prison sentences. In Brazil, according to a study from 2007, 70 per cent of the prison population had not completed basic education and 10.5 per cent of prisoners were illiterate (de Se e Silva, 2009, p. 195). Tackling the issue of low literacy in the prison context is consequently high on the government´s agenda. At the federal state level, a programme called Redemption Through Reading was launched in 2013 to enable inmates to reduce their sentences by reading books. A law passed in 2012 allows for a reduction of four days per completed book, up to a maximum 48 days per year. Prisoners can select a book from a pre-approved list, after which they have four weeks to read it. In order to assess whether an inmate has read a book properly, they are required to submit a review within four weeks of borrowing it. The review must be well-written, capture the book's essence and be free of mistakes. Not only is this programme considered a meaningful activity for the inmates, it is also seen as a tool to tackle literacy challenges (Lee and Rowe, 2014).

India has implemented a literacy tutoring programme called Padho aur Padhao (First Learn Yourself and Then Teach Others) in Tihar Jail, South Asia´s largest prison complex. Around 25 per cent of its 12,200 inmates are illiterate. The National Literacy Mission is behind the initiative, preparing inmates for life after prison. Literate prisoners volunteer to teach their fellow inmates, supported by trained teachers. The programme has received an overwhelming response from literate inmates, of whom approximately 200 have volunteered to train illiterate prisoners. 'Each morning, the jail's cells and courtyards transform into classrooms with literate convicts and special educators training illiterates in accordance to guidelines laid down by the National Literacy Mission' (Sunil Gupta, Tihar´s law officer, cited in Rana, 2011). At the end of the programme, successful participants receive certificates administered by the National Literacy Mission. These are issued after the completion of an exam that includes questions testing inmates' English, Hindi and basic arithmetic skills.

The African Prisons Project (APP) was established in 2007. Today, it supports 30 prisons in Kenya and Uganda with the aim of turning African prisons into places of positive transformation. The APP's life skills and vocational programmes provide basic skills and practical vocational training to encourage prisoners to use their time to prepare for release, resettlement and employment. As a result, 100 per cent of ex-prisoners who completed the life skills training have gained employment post-release. The APP also provides a literacy and numeracy programme, Functional Adult Literacy (FAL), which is delivered to prisoners who have no formal education. Of 124 inmates enrolled in the FAL programme in Nakasongola (Uganda), for example, 124 sat end-of-year exams with an 88.8 per cent pass rate in literacy and a 95 per cent pass rate in numeracy (APP, 2017).

PROVIDING LIBRARY SERVICES IN PRISONS

Prison libraries can play a significant role in creating a literate environment. The Council of Europe states: 'The value and possibilities of libraries are often underestimated … Libraries support and extend the learning that takes place in classes by providing books and other materials, and by serving as locations for organized activities. But libraries are also an important source of informal education in their own right and are often used by those who do not join other educational activities or courses' (Council of Europe, 1990, p. 34). When selecting stock for a prison library, it is important to cater to the specific needs of prisoners with low literacy levels and those from different linguistic backgrounds. However, the main value of a prison library lies in its ability to establish a love for reading and to provide users with opportunities for further education, entertainment, distraction and self-reflection. Thus, a specific purpose of prison libraries is to encourage inmates to use library materials creatively to read and write and, ultimately, to become lifelong learners.

The Council of Europe recommends that 'Prisoners should have direct access to a well-stocked library at least once a week' (Council of Europe, 1990, p. 4). In Germany, offenders are entitled to access a library during their free time; however, no legislation exists that specifies what resources should be available to prison libraries or how they should be organized. A lack of resources and budgetary limitations, coupled

with the special circumstances and manifold regulations governing prisons and detention centres, have prevented prison libraries from running as efficiently as they should. For instance, prisons in most German federal states do not employ professional librarians.

This used to be the case in the **Münster Prison Library** (p. 74), situated in the Münster correctional facility, which was built in 1853 and is one of the oldest prisons in **Germany**. Historically, it has offered library services, but it was not until 2003 that a professional and dedicated librarian was employed, leading to fundamental physical and conceptual changes. In 2005, an architect completely redesigned the library, transforming it into an attractive, colourful and inspiring environment that encouraged users to read and spend time there. Following renovation, the library collection consisted of almost 10,000 materials in 30 languages. More than 2,000 foreign-language titles enable inmates from more than 50 countries to read in their mother tongue. As well as fiction and non-fiction, the library provides easy-to-read titles; illustrated books and comics; newspapers and magazines; audio books; CDs; and DVDs. Graded reading materials cater for inmates with low reading skills, while publications on legal topics give prisoners important background information on how the justice system works.

The prison library has entered into partnerships with many local organizations, including bookstores, publishers, the university and, above all, Münster's public library. For example, an inter-library loan system gives inmates access to the public library's collection. Working closely with other cultural organizations, the Münster Prison Library has held various cultural events, including readings and talks by authors and artists, to give inmates a taste of what is happening beyond the prison walls.

A survey was conducted in 2006 to assess inmates' reading habits. Two hundred questionnaires were completed by inmates (equating to a participation rate of 40 per cent). Of these, 79 per cent stated they used their free time for reading, making it the most popular leisure activity, with watching TV in second place. Sixty per cent of respondents said they read for an average of two hours a day, which far exceeded the amount of time that most had spent reading prior to

their incarceration. The majority of reading materials (88 per cent) came from the prison library; the remainder were obtained from fellow inmates. More than 80 per cent of respondents used the library monthly and almost half used it on a weekly basis. Eighty-three per cent stated that their primary motive for reading was educational or for the purposes of gathering information. The Münster Prison Library's significant social contribution led to it being named German Library of the Year in 2007.

Prison libraries in other countries similarly provide reading materials, but they also act as learning and formal education centres. In the USA, family literacy programmes have become very popular in many prisons, as have one-to-one literacy tutorials, whereby inmates tutor one another or external volunteers provide on-site services. For this to happen, the prison library must be able to provide relevant materials and learning spaces, as well as training and supervision for tutors (Lehmann, 2011, p. 505). There are many other innovative and creative ways in which prison libraries can be used to support literacy opportunities: prisoners can record their readings (e.g. bedtime stories) to share with their children; libraries can host reading circles and book clubs; prisoners can create their own books for their children, families and friends; and inmates can engage in creative writing (including poetry), debating groups, theatre workshops and so on.

In Africa, prisons often lack adequate reading materials and, as they are often overcrowded, it is difficult to establish an environment conducive to reading and study, especially for prisoners taking part in formal education programmes. Existing prison libraries support formal adult education, as teachers are able to use their materials to develop or improve their curricula. These libraries play a key role as leisure and recreation centres for the whole prison community; places in which people can gather to read, take part in organized literacy activities, or simply engage in a game of chess (APP, 2017).

If managing a prison library is not feasible for budgetary, organizational or other reasons, a cooperation with an external library service can provide a solution. In Nicaragua, for example, the Bibliobús Bertolt Brecht regularly delivers reading materials to prisons (for details, see the section on mobile libraries, above).

STRENGTHENING FAMILY BONDS IN THE PRISON ENVIRONMENT

Connecting with their families is of crucial importance to prisoners, contributing not only to their overall well-being during their time in prison but also to their preparedness for life following release. It is therefore important to help incarcerated fathers and mothers to establish and maintain strong bonds with their partners and children, and, ideally, to provide time and space for them to learn, have fun and enjoy reading and writing activities. The benefits of this extend to the children of prisoners, who are particular vulnerable and at risk of being imprisoned as adults. 'It is important … that families are supported through terms of imprisonment to break that cycle of offending. Family learning is an ideal vehicle for contributing to this by strengthening family bonds, developing skills, by emphasizing the importance of education and by demonstrating that learning is for everyone and that it can be fun and exciting" (Folarin et al., 2011, p. 24). Research shows that maintaining family relationships during a term of imprisonment directly contributes to reducing offending, both for the imprisoned parent and for their children (ibid., p. 29). Interactive literacy activities increase the literacy skills of parents and children, strengthen their relationship, build positive memories, and make reading more enjoyable. During workshops, an imprisoned parent can acquire and practise child-centric reading and storytelling techniques, including how to read aloud; how to write letters and poems for their children; how to create and illustrate a book; and how to play games that relate to the themes of a book or story. Furthermore, family literacy and learning sessions might motivate the imprisoned parent to take up further literacy and learning opportunities for the sake of their children.

In 2011, Best Start for Families (BSfF) instituted the **Prison Family Learning Programme** (PFLP) (p. 94) in the **UK**. The PFLP primarily targets imprisoned mothers and their children, with the aim of providing them with quality family learning opportunities. Accordingly, BSfF has designed and developed an integrated programme curriculum that covers a wide range of topics that specifically address the learning needs and interests of parents and their children. The programme includes mothers-only learning sessions, which cover functional literacy, good-parenting practises, the role of the parent in supporting a child's literacy development,

and how parents and children can create their own reading materials. The topics covered during family learning sessions vary greatly since the primary aim is to enable parents and children to interact and learn together. Family visiting days are transformed into family learning days, thereby creating an opportunity for imprisoned mothers to interact and learn together with their children, most of whom are in foster families and/or have been taken into care.

Meanwhile, a prison in **Argentina** allows imprisoned mothers to keep their children with them up to the age of four, following the 2010 launch of **Reading and Writing in Unit 33: Mothers, Children and Educational Institutions** (p. 114), spearheaded by the National University of La Plata in collaboration with the Argentinian authorities. The programme was developed as a means of safeguarding the cultural rights of prison inmates in Unit 33, a women's prison unit equipped to accommodate pregnant women, mothers and children up to four years of age. The project's main goals are to provide a space for reading and writing; support children in their educational choices; and promote training for teachers who assist children outside Unit 33. It focuses on three areas of activity: the 'La Ronda' workshop (a non-school workspace that enables interaction among participants); public nursery and infant schools; and periodical coordination meetings for organizers.

Inspired by La Ronda, authorities now disseminate literacy and reading-related materials to all nursery and infant schools in the province. Participants describe La Ronda as an excellent resource, a place where they can read to 'inhabit other worlds' and, by extension, read their own world 'between the lines'. The programme has, however, encountered challenges: its members struggle disproportionately to access formal education, are more isolated in terms of family contacts, and find it difficult to incorporate facilitators as permanent staff.

As the case studies in this section show, providing prisoners with lifelong learning opportunities, in general, and literacy opportunities, in particular, has a significant impact. Every person has the right to be literate, prisoners included. They deserve a good education, particularly if they were failed by compulsory education. Furthermore, society clearly benefits when recidivism rates are reduced and prisoners have the

support they need to settle back into their communities and have a basis for a better, self-determined future for themselves and for their families. Less crime makes society a safer place. It also saves public money as keeping people in custody is cost-intensive. In view of the extremely high socio-economic costs of crime and the fact that offering prisoners quality (literacy) education, as well as access to books and reading materials, supports prisoner rehabilitation and can thus prevent crime, it is in the interests of decision-makers and citizens alike to explore successful interventions and provide the resources needed to implement effective practises of this kind.

CREATING A SUSTAINABLE DEMAND FOR LITERACY

The tasks that people need to perform in their daily lives, in different domains and for different purposes, are increasingly complex. They require continuous learning and the further development of core competences such as literacy, numeracy, language skills and digital competence. At the same time, this set of core competences – and other transferable skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking – form an indispensable foundation for other kinds of learning. Responses to the ongoing challenges and demands of dynamic and fast-changing contexts must pay particular attention to motivating and helping young people and adults with low literacy and education levels – as well as their children – to become independent, confident and effective lifelong learners.

It is not enough to design high-quality learning programmes, complete with well-designed and attractive learning materials, trained teachers and good monitoring and evaluation systems. It is equally important to motivate learners to enrol and remain in a programme long enough to develop sustainable literacy skill levels. Furthermore, they should be offered further learning opportunities and encouraged to make use of them. It is imperative, therefore, that the creation of literate environments be a component of all literacy strategies and policies.

Creating a literate environment is not limited to providing access to reading materials and ICTs. It must also take on the complex task of creating the conditions needed

to learn, to continue learning, and to build a culture that values reading and writing in schools, families, communities and society at large. The collective social value of and need for reading, writing and learning has long been emphasized (Torres, 1994), and underscores the importance of developing strategies that bring the culture of written texts closer to the people, especially people from disadvantaged communities, by harnessing their own languages, cultures and values.

The examples analysed in this introduction and documented in more detail in the case studies that follow show how the creation of literate environments can have a positive impact on people's motivation to (re-)engage in literacy and learning, and how they can be encouraged to use and practise their newly acquired skills in their everyday lives. Successful approaches to creating a sustainable demand for literacy and learning include:

- making reading materials of direct interest to the learner freely accessible;
- offering learners the opportunity to continue their studies and obtain recognized qualifications;
- introducing ICTs into the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy, with the additional aim of developing digital competences;
- bringing literacy and learning into peoples' homes by involving the whole family in learning activities;
- enhancing libraries' ability to offer a range of services to learners;
- reaching out to marginalized communities through reading materials and learning activities;
- nurturing a culture of reading and writing for pleasure by encouraging (young) people to improve their literacy skills and find their own voice.

The programmes featured in this publication reflect different cultural backgrounds and are transferable to a variety of contexts. More examples of inspiring adult literacy and learning programmes can be found in UNESCO's Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practises Database (LitBase), a continuously developing database of high-potential adult literacy programmes: www.unesco.org/uil/litbase.

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eBooks and Family Literacy Programme

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population
94,101,000 (2013)

Official languages
Amharic; English (there are more than 75 officially recognized regional languages, e.g. Tigrinya; Oromifa; Tigre; Harari; Agaw; Afar)

Poverty
(Population living on less than USD 1.25 per day)
31% (2011)

Total expenditure on education as % of GNP
4.74% (2010)

Youth literacy rate (15–24 years, 2015)
Female: 67.8%; Male: 71.13%; Both sexes: 69.5%

Adult literacy rate (15+ years, 2015)
Female: 41.1%; Male: 57.2%; Both sexes: 49.1%

Statistical sources
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
eBooks and Family Literacy Programme

Implementing organization
Canadian Organization for Development (CODE-Ethiopia)

Language of instruction
Amharic and Oromo

Funding
CODE-Ethiopia, Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL)

Programme partners
Electronic Information For Libraries (EIFL) and Canadian Organization for Development (CODE)

Annual programme costs: USD 20,000

Annual programme cost per learner: USD 219.80

Date of inception
2014

COUNTRY CONTEXT

The linguistic and cultural heritage of Ethiopia is rich and complex. More than 80 ethnic groups, each with its own distinct local languages, live in the country. Some of the languages spoken have a written script, with Amharic the most common (Alidou and Glanz, 2015). Other languages have, more recently, adopted Latin script or used a mixture of Amharic and Latin characters to produce a hybrid script. The multilingual environment has been actively supported by the government since the 1990s, when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took power and led the transition to a federative form of government, which it still leads. Each of the states in the new federation has been encouraged to use local languages for administrative, judiciary and educational purposes. Primary schools classes are conducted in 21 different languages, while some local languages are also used in higher education. Amharic, the Official language of the federal government, is taught as a second language in states where it is not the mother language

(ibid.). This variety of different linguistic uses and scripts should be taken into account in the design of educational and literacy policies.

Although the federal government has sought to promote primary, secondary and adult education, a large part of the population still struggles with literacy, especially in rural areas and among women (Shenkut, 2005). This has been compounded by the low levels of financial and material resources available for delivering recent education reforms. Many schools are poorly equipped, often lacking reading rooms and libraries, and with access to few books that are outdated or inappropriate for the age or skills level of the students (CODE-Ethiopia, 2015).

However, recent investment in primary and secondary education has overall had a positive impact on young people, though adults have not benefited to the same extent. According to a recent survey, almost half of Ethiopian fathers and a third of mothers have complet-

ed primary school, while a significant proportion (45 per cent of fathers and 73 per cent of mothers) have no education (LSMS and World Bank, 2015). Several studies highlight the significant correlation between the culture of literacy within a family and children's acquisition of literacy skills (Hanemann, 2013). In addition, the risk of school failure and drop-out is lower when parents participate actively in learning activities with their children. Therefore, adult education and literacy skills should be enhanced, not only to respond to adults' needs, but also to enable parents to be more involved in the educational experiences of their children.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

CODE-Ethiopia is a non-profit, non-governmental local organization established in 1994 as a partner of CODE, the Canadian Organization for Development through Education. Since 1959, CODE has supported the publication of books that engage and enhance literacy skills for children and young people, the establishment and the maintenance of libraries, and teacher training around the world. Up to now, Code-Ethiopia has established 97 community libraries (CLs) in rural Ethiopia, serving local communities in ways that reflect their cultural, social and economic lives.

The eBooks and Family Literacy Programme (eBFLP) was piloted between May 2014 and June 2015. Ebooks are digital versions of books, which can be accessed online, by computer or other information and communication technology (ICT) tools, or can be downloaded, printed and used offline by anyone who can access an internet connection or has access to the PDF copy of the eBook. The accessibility characteristic is particularly relevant in a multilingual context where books in local languages are scare. Providing access to the same book in different languages is an immediate response to this need. The accessibility issue is also relevant given the prohibitive cost of having books printed in all the different languages.

The pilot programme was funded by a grant from the Electronic Information for Libraries Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP). The grant covered the costs of providing the three pilot libraries with computers, LCD projectors, projection screens and six eBooks commissioned from local writers and illustra-

tors. The salaries of the full-time librarians were covered by local governments.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Overall, eBFLP aims to promote reading, as well as critical and creative thinking, among families in rural Ethiopia, through activities that can support whole-family literacy as well as literacy development at pre-school age.

Specific objectives are:
- Providing access to digital, mother-tongue, quality, pre-school materials to children and their families in rural Ethiopia.
- Developing, publishing and distributing culturally and linguistically relevant early literacy materials.
- Engaging parents in their children's educational activities and providing knowledge and skills on how children grow, develop and learn.
- Connecting parents with community learning centres and resources, and providing opportunities for them to network and develop mutual-support mechanisms within their community.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The six librarians from the three community libraries participating in the pilot (two librarians from each CL) were provided with a set of eBooks in different local languages and the necessary ICT tools to use them in family literacy workshops. CLs were selected based on the interest and commitment shown by librarians.

The pilot worked with three rural community libraries: Fitche, in the state of Oromia; Dubertie, in the state of Amara; and Dire Dawa, one of two city administrations in Ethiopia. Library staff organized and managed at least three family literacy workshops in the period between May 2014 and June 2015, aimed at pre-school children and their parents. Every workshop ran for 11 weeks and sessions were given on weekly basis.

APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

At the heart of eBFLP is the family literacy approach: children and their parents are engaged in learning activities that encourage them to interact and to learn from each other. The approach fosters intergenerational engagement within the family and the com-

munity, and bridges formal and non-formal learning, supporting parents and children to become partners in education. Drawing on this approach, the programme aims to increase parents' awareness of the importance of early literacy for the cognitive development of their children. Moreover, it helps parents to enrich their relationships with their children through active participation in educational activities and to develop competences in order to nurture their children's language and literacy skills, as well as their interest in reading.

The programme comprises 11 workshop sessions in which both parents and children participate. During these sessions, the librarian guides families through activities intended to improve the language and literacy skills of children and their parents, as well as the parents' ability to help their children. Workshop sessions are structured as follows:

- Activities to do before reading – including a revision of what was covered in the previous section.
- Activities to do while reading – including reading a story out loud, and asking participants what they learned from it.
- Activities to do after reading – including discussion of assignments and homework and the distribution of a printed copy of a new eBook to each child.

In a typical session, the librarian might read an eBook aloud to participants and set modeling activities that parents can use when reading with their children at home. The reading is preceded by a warm-up activity aimed at improving oral language and phonemic awareness and other activities to foster the ability to make inferences drawing on the title and illustrations of the books. One of the core pre-reading activities is 'book walking'. The librarian goes through the pages of the book and participants share their expectations about the story, using the illustrations. While reading, participants are encouraged to discuss the events of the story, to express their opinion on the main characters and to imagine how the story will evolve. After the reading, children and parents read the story again, by themselves, and are then engaged in more proactive follow-up activities, such as drawing, acting or physical games. At the end of every session, the librarian gives the printed copy of the book the families, and asks them to complete a task at home before the following session.

The eBFLP curriculum has been developed to address both early reading and pre-literacy skills. The first eight sessions are focused on reading the six eBooks proposed by the librarians, while, in the last three sessions, participants create two eBooks of their own.

The use of eBooks as learning materials is a positive way of addressing literacy acquisition. Children can either listen to the book being read or read it by themselves. They can also click on the more challenging words or expressions to hear the right pronunciation or definition. This same option can be used by adults who need support in strengthening their reading skills. Moreover, eBooks represent a particularly useful resource in multilingual and rural contexts. The same eBook can be translated into several different languages, which can be selected from the main menu. At the same time, eBooks offer a useful alternative in rural and remote areas, where access to commercial print books may be limited due to their cost.

TEACHING MATERIAL

The six eBooks used during the pilot phase were produced by local authors and illustrators and made available in two local languages, Amharic and Oromo. They cover themes related to animals, school life and friendship. Every book includes a list of suggested activities for the librarians, to help them to conduct sessions effectively. Suggested activities include: rhyming, drawing a picture based on the story, and asking questions about the cover of a book.

During the last three sessions, participants write and design their own eBook. Children and families write their own stories. Two stories are then selected, through a process facilitated by librarians, and further developed. The other stories are kept for reference and may be published in the organization's biannual magazine. Illustrations by participants are added at the end. The final selected stories are given to CODE-Ethiopia and retouched by professional book developers and illustrators. Each new eBook created enriches the library collection and the experience of its users with a meaningful story grounded in the community's values, traditions and memories.

Examples of the eBooks created by participants can be found on the organization's website: https://codeethiopiadigitalbooks.wordpress.com/workshops/

RECRUITING AND TRAINING OF FACILITATORS

The CLs were established not only to collect books and provide access to resources. For CODE, a successful CL should be more than a reading room. It should meet the learning needs of all the members of the local community and promote a wide range of learning activities. For this reason, CL staff should manage the library in a way that reflects the needs and wishes of the local community.

To improve the capacity of librarians to create programmes for the promotion of reading, CODE-Ethiopia organized a one-week workshop in December 2014, at the Cooperative Training Centre of the Ministry of Education, in Addis Ababa. The librarians who participated had attended other reading promotion training and library management courses. During the training provided for eBFLP, they were trained in family literacy approaches and how to design a literacy programme, and taught the ICT skills required for the programme, such as the capacity to work with specific software for eBooks production or to use data projectors and computers more proficiently. The librarians were also provided with assessment tools to track the impact of the programme. New training courses are planned.

ENROLMENT OF LEARNERS

Every library implementing eBFLP promoted the programme by posting advertisements in places where families spend time, such as early childhood education and development centres and primary schools. The advertisements were printed in languages spoken within the community, mainly Amharic, Oromo, Somali and English.

Only applicants meeting specific requirements were eligible for the programme: parents with basic literacy skills in one local language and at least one child aged between 3 and 6 years old. Parents had to commit to attending each of the 11 sessions. Participants were selected from eligible families by lottery. In some cases, parents with low literacy skills were accepted as well, but additional support was provided by referring them to adult literacy centres, as in the case of the CL in Dire Dwa. Adults who did not have solid literacy skills were also supported by librarians during the workshops.

ASSESSMENT, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The effective implementation of the programme and its evaluation were assured by assessment tools, which were used before, during and at the end of the pilot, and by monitoring visits conducted by CODE-Ethiopia.

Questionnaires and tests were provided to librarians during training to track and document the work undertaken. A test was administered to children before and at the end of the programme, in order to assess their literacy skills and understanding of the use of printed words. A librarian might, for example, show an illustrated book to a child and ask her questions regarding books and their use. Questions could include identifying the front and the back of a book, where a story starts, and where he or she should continue to read when at the end of the page. Another questionnaire was used to gather background information about families, such as the schooling level of parents and their reading habits. A third and final questionnaire was used to collect families' feedbacks on the eBooks developed by CODE-Ethiopia and on the related activities. This was done to adjust the programme to local need. For parents, a separate assessment tool was created to record baseline data and evaluate the programme. Some librarians (for example, in Fiche) have also developed their own questionnaire for parents and tried to collect information from participant parents. CODE-Ethiopia provided a service for librarians who needed additional support in the administration of the assessment tools. The data collected through the assessment tools were analysed by CODE-Ethiopia in order to better understand the impact and effectiveness of the programme, as well as to find ways to improve it, taking into account feedback from parents and children.

IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

ACHIEVEMENTS

Between May 2014 and June 2015, eleven workshops ran in three pilot CLs. Each workshop reached, on average, 20 children and their families. A total of 91 participants attended in one year (some of them going to multiple workshops).

The impact of the project on children has been considerable. Analysis of the data collected through the

assessment tools highlights the significant increase in the print awareness of the children. In addition, according to the libraries' records, the number of visitors has grown in the three pilot CLs, showing an increasing interest from adults in the resources and activities offered by the libraries.

Most of the librarians who participated in the pilot reported gains in confidence in implementing and promoting reading activities as part of their job. With regard to the impact on participants, CODE-Ethiopia focused primarily on children's outcomes, but the whole community benefits from the new ICT tools available in their CLs.

Among the many innovative features of the programme, one of the most interesting was the production of new eBooks, created collaboratively with families, for the library's collection.

CHALLENGES

The family literacy approach embraced by eBFLP aimed to enhance early literacy skills by involving parents in the education process. For many parents, participation was also an opportunity to enhance their own language and literacy skills. Parents were, however, required to have reached a minimum threshold level in literacy in order to enrol in the programme, as otherwise they would not have been able to fully participate in the activities. This baseline literacy level was not always enough to enable parents to participate actively with their children in some of the more challenging reading activities. This is a crucial point to take into account in the implementation of family literacy programmes in some rural areas of Ethiopia, where many adults are struggling with reading and writing skills. Some of the parents who faced these difficulties were encouraged to join an adult literacy programme.

Other difficulties were related to the training offered to the librarians. One week was, in many cases, not enough for many of them to acquire essential ICT skills. Moreover, the use of assessment tools was challenging and staff also required more training to become fully confident in their use.

Lastly, it is evident that CLs do not have enough ICTs. Some do not have internet access either and have to make do with digital copies of the eBooks saved on their computers. Power outages make the use of computers challenging as well.

LESSONS LEARNED

The family literacy approach embraced by eBFLP succeeded in involving adults and children together in the activities of the community library. Reading and writing together is not only a means to enhance language and literacy skills, it builds community among those who share a common story and space. More specifically, reading aloud is a pleasant experience shared between parents and children as members of a community. In this common space, parents can discuss worries and difficulties regarding their role as educators and supporters of their children's education.

Reading aloud is often considered an activity reserved only for young children. However, the pilot programme gave adults and older children the opportunity to enjoy listening to someone reading to a group. Reading aloud also provided access to language usage and a vocabulary beyond their current reading and language level.

More significantly, the family literacy approach helped to fulfill the main aim of the community libraries: to be more than a simple reading room, and become a shared place where the local community can gather, and develop networks and mutual support mechanisms.

SUSTAINABILITY

Despite the fact that expenditure on the pilot programme was covered by the grant, the expansion of the programme to other CLs, projected to take place between 2016 and 2020, still faces sustainability issues. In order to address this challenge, an agreement has been reached between local authorities, community members and CODE-Ethiopia in order to transfer ownership of the programme and responsibility for it to local communities. The agreement is not a written one but rather an oral understanding between CODE and communities which were informed, before the beginning of the programme, of the budgetary limitations. This understanding includes the responsibility of each community for the costs associated with all programme's components. This responsibility corresponds to the ownership that each community has of their CL.

Almost all the 95 CLs established by CODE-Ethiopia and local communities over the last 15 to 20 years are still active, owned and run by their communities using funding from the government's budget and other NGOs.

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Reading and Writing for Pleasure

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population 47,432,000 (2007 estimate)

Poverty
(Population living on less than USD 1 per day)
10.7% (1990–2004)

Official languages
Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu

Total expenditure on education as % of GNP
5.5%

**Access to primary education –
total net intake rate (NIR)**
51% (2005)

Total youth literacy rate (15–24 years)
94% (1995–2004)

Adult literacy rate (15 years and over, 1995–2004)
Total: 82%; Male: 84%; Female: 81%

Sources
- UNESCO: EFA Global Monitoring Report
- UNICEF: Info by Country
- World Bank: World Development Indicators database

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Reading and Writing for Pleasure

Implementing organization
FundZa Literacy Trust

Language of instruction English

Funding
DG Murray Trust, Claude Leon Foundation, Potter Foundation, Indigo Trust, Nussbaum Foundation, the Learning Trust and other philanthropic organizations.

Programme partners Mxit Reach

Annual programme costs
ZAR 3 million (USD 265,137)

Annual programme cost per learner
ZAR 6 (USD 0.53)

Date of inception 2011

COUNTRY CONTEXT

South Africa's low levels of education and literacy contribute to the ongoing cycle of poverty in the country. South Africa was the lowest-ranked benchmarking participant in the 2011 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The study found that 43 per cent of Grade 5 students had not acquired the basic skills necessary to read at a level equivalent to international Grade 4. Significant improvement in reading and literacy is vital for South Africa's future development.

A number of factors explain why South Africa has not developed a strong culture of reading. One of the biggest is that books are very expensive – many South Africans simply cannot afford to buy books. A study conducted by the South African Book Development Council in 2007 found that just 1 per cent of South Africans were regular book-buyers (i.e. had bought at least three books to read for pleasure in the previous twelve months).

Another factor is that schools and libraries are not providing the type of access that can drive a culture of reading. A study by Equal Education found that while 21 per cent of state schools in South Africa had a library, only 7 per cent were actually functional and stocked with books. Furthermore, the books with which libraries are stocked are, in many cases, not the sort that would appeal to reluctant readers. There are very few books that reflect the lives of young South Africans from under-resourced communities.

FundZa's mission is to drive demand for reading and writing, increase access to quality content delivered in new and innovative ways, enable aspiring writers to publish their creative work, and encourage interaction, discussion and debate.

The FundZa Literacy Trust is a non-profit organization dedicated to growing a culture of reading and writing among South African young people (aged 13–25) from low-income or under-resourced communities.

FundZa is managed by a highly skilled team of professionals, supported by a committed board of trustees who provide governance and oversight. FundZa works with a wide range of stakeholders, including government and independent schools, other non-profits and community-based organizations, corporates and foundations.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

The specific aim of the programme is to inspire young people to read and to grow a culture of reading and writing. To promote literacy among South African youth, FundZa focuses on the power of reading for pleasure, rather than on curriculum-based academic support. Studies show that reading for pleasure is a powerful indicator of future success out of school, as well as increasing skills of language and vocabulary development.

To achieve its aims, FundZa runs four outreach programmes:

1. Popularizing Reading is growing a network of beneficiary organizations around South Africa, and providing them with high-interest, exciting teenage/young adult fiction books to encourage reading for pleasure. Beneficiary groups provide regular feedback to FundZa about how successful the books have been in getting young people to read.
2. Growing Communities of Readers leverages the extensive reach of mobile technology to deliver quality, locally-generated reading content to teenagers and young adults on their mobile phones. The 'mobi network' is interactive and encourages reader feedback and discussion of stories. Every week, FundZa commissions a professional writer to contribute a new short story to its growing 'library on a phone'. This is released in serial format – a new chapter appears each day – engaging readers and helping to make reading a daily habit.
3. Developing Young Writers encourages young people to improve their written communication skills and discover their own unique voice. This programme runs a variety of writing workshops and hosts writing mentorship programmes for talented young writers. All work produced in this programme is published in the 'Fanz' section of the mobi network. Readers comment on the work and so encourage the writers to improve and develop their story-telling skills.
4. Deepening Reading Practise is a newly launched programme to provide support material for teachers and reading-group facilitators to use FundZa's extra-curricular reading content to improve comprehension skills and deepen the reading experience.
5. FundZa's main target audience is black South African youth aged between 13 and 25, and the groups that support them. FundZa is still a young organization but its reach is significant. It has worked with more than 200 beneficiary groups (each supporting an average of 100 readers), delivering in excess of 30,000 books. More than 600,000 people have accessed its mobi reading app with in excess of 50,000 accessing it on a monthly basis. Over 500 young people have had their writing published through FundZa.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Besides the main objective – to inspire young people to read and grow a culture of reading and writing – FundZa's outreach programmes work together to:

1. Create demand for reading and provide content to which young people in South Africa can relate and which will get them interested in reading. Content is locally produced. The stories reflect the lives, issues and ambitions of many young people.
2. Increase access to relevant reading content by providing under-resourced communities with high-interest books and stories at no or low cost to individual readers.
3. Leverage the reach of mobile technology to extend the impact and grow new communities of readers.
4. Encourage readers to practise their writing skills and thereby celebrate new creative voices.
5. Spur viral growth, thus obviating the need for expensive mass-marketing campaigns. FundZa's mobi network is designed to encourage sharing of content and to support converted readers in getting their friends, family and community to read too.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

FundZa's approach hinges on its conviction that reading for pleasure is one of the most important steps towards lifelong literacy, academic success and self-development. Research has found that reading for pleasure is one of the most accurate indicators of future success, more so even than the educational level of a child's parents. Reading for pleasure helps to boost achievement in maths and science subjects, as well as the more obvious link to language-based subjects.

The key to FundZa's work is providing material that young people want to read, that will develop their understanding of the world around them, and that exploits the most accessible media available so as to engage as many young people as possible.

In the Popularizing Reading programme, the beneficiary groups organize the management of the book reading process themselves. Some use the books as part of classroom lessons, reading aloud or reading in groups; others use them in a classroom library or as part of a lending programme. FundZa also provides resource material to accompany the books in order to encourage facilitators or teachers to engage in open discussion about the material, rather than using exercises with 'right' or 'wrong' answers. This is essential in the development of active and engaged readers and thinkers. Activities include ideas for discussions and debates, comprehension exercises and fun word games.

Through the Growing Communities of Readers programme, FundZa adds a new story to its 'library on a cellphone' every week. Each story is serialized over the course of the week, encouraging readers to visit daily to find out what happens next. Discussion questions at the end of chapters facilitate reader interaction – readers can comment on the stories, tell others what they think about issues relating to the story, or share predictions as to what they think will happen next. The content is archived in the growing library, which means that it will be available to readers in the future.

There is debate about the role of local language in South African education. FundZa believes in the importance of reading in one's local language, to sup-

port cognitive and personal development, and at least once a month one of the stories is translated into one of South Africa's local languages. But FundZa also recognizes that young people in South Africa must sit examinations in English. English remains a vital part of South Africa's education and business world. Therefore, the encouragement of a reading culture in English is also extremely important. This requires content written in English that is relevant to readers' lives, so that the skills of reading – comprehension, inferring, reflecting – are almost automatically engaged. FundZa creates or commissions a large portion of its reading content. This is because very little local literature is made available to the general public through traditional publishing or book-selling channels.

Finally, through its Developing Young Writers programme, FundZa hosts Write4Life writing workshops, which take place over one or two days. There are different types of workshops, including: Writing Me, Branding Me, Investigating Life and Writing Good Essays. In addition, readers can submit their creative writing for publication in the 'Fanz' section of the mobi network. FundZa provides writers with feedback on their work and publishes writing and editing tips to help them to improve their written communication skills. For very talented writers, FundZa offers a mentorship programme in which young writers are paired with a professional writer to develop stories for the FundZa mobi network.

The programmes are ongoing, apart from the Write4Life workshops, which take place for specific groups (generally between 20 and 25 young people at a time) over a limited time period. The Growing Communities of Readers programme is designed to be offered at scale – so a limitless number of readers can access the content at the same point in time anywhere in the country.

As the objective of the programmes is to encourage reading and writing for pleasure rather than formal learning, there are no certificates or accreditations for participants.

PROGRAMME CONTENT

FundZa works with young South Africans within its target group to find out what sort of stories engage

them in reading for pleasure. Incorporating feedback and making changes has been key to understanding what works.

The vast amount of content – whether in print or electronic format – is fictional, but FundZa also promotes the telling of true stories, memoirs and biographies that might inspire young people. As these stories are written specifically for young South Africans, they cover topics and issues that are relevant to young people's lives. For instance, FundZa offers stories on teen pregnancy, gangs, xenophobia, homophobia, bullying, and so on. The stories do not preach but contain positive messages that aim to help young people reflect on their choices and better understand the relationship between cause and effect.

Much of the material is developed by professional writers who work collaboratively with the FundZa team to meets the needs of readers. All print books are tested with learners as part of the editing process. Their feedback helps the writers ensure that the content meets their needs. In addition, the feedback received from stories on the mobi network and from the various beneficiary groups around the country helps FundZa understand what content works best to inspire a culture of reading.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF FACILITATORS

Generally, workshop facilitation is conducted by FundZa staff members. They are paid R250 (US $22.28) per hour or R2,000 (US $178.26) for a day's work.

The facilitators receive in-house and on-the-job training. One Write4Life workshop – Writing Good Essays – trains teachers too. They are taken through a similar course aimed at the learners on this course and are given additional tips on how to encourage their students to write more creatively and coherently. The leaders of the beneficiary groups receive monthly newsletters that provide them with instructions on how to get their students to read more. FundZa also promotes reading for pleasure through conferences and events, as well as its work with partner organizations.

In the writing workshops, the ratio is generally between eight and twelve learners per facilitator. For writing mentorship, the ratio is one to one.

Mobile technology is used to deliver the content used in the Growing Communities of Readers programme. This also provides a publishing space for young writers involved in the Developing Young Writers programme. In addition, FundZa uses technology to communicate with the teachers, reading club facilitators and reading champions in the Popularizing Reading programme. Group leaders complete short monthly surveys that can be completed on their mobile phones, tablets or computers. This is used to measure engagement with the programme and the success of the books in getting young people to read.

REGISTRATION

Popularizing Reading programme: Beneficiary groups – schools, community libraries, non-profit organizations and reading clubs – are invited to apply to become a beneficiary group to receive donated books from FundZa. There must be a 'reading champion' or group leader who will take responsibility for the books and provide regular feedback. This person signs a contract with FundZa agreeing to these terms and promising that the books will be used well, cared for properly and used to promote reading in the group/library/school.

Growing Communities of Readers programme: Individual readers can access FundZa's 'library on a phone' in a number of different ways – through the responsive site, by downloading the Mxit app and making FundZa a contact, or by downloading FundZapp from the Google Play store. The process is opt-in – so readers need to be motivated enough to open the app or access the content of their own volition.

Developing Young Writers programme: For the Write4Life workshops, most frequently FundZa works with groups of learners involved in the Popularizing Reading programme. However, in terms of submitting work for publication in the 'Fanz' section of the mobi network, most writers self-select, i.e. they send through their creative writing work of their own accord.

Importantly, because the programmes are about reading and writing for pleasure, there are no formal assessments. The idea is to promote reading and writing as activities, to make them seem fun and pleasurable – rather than to assess and grade.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

All programmes are monitored and the Growing Communities of Readers programme has been externally evaluated.

The Popularizing Reading programme is being regulated by monitoring the number of books delivered, the number of readers reached through each group and the response of readers to the content. In addition, reading facilitators report back on how the books are impacting on attitudes to reading and language acquisition. This feedback shows that FundZa´s books are developing a culture of reading among the groups, particularly for the stronger and keener readers but also for weaker or more reluctant ones. In addition, they are helping young people to develop their language skills.

In the Growing Communities of Readers programme, the mobi network is continuously being monitored through Google Analytics and a specially developed monitoring system that works on the Mxit App. The latter links individual readers' Mxit ID numbers (unique identifier) to every page accessed on the system. These are time-stamped and provide some access to demographic data (date of birth, gender and, in some cases, location).

This system has provided FundZa with data it can analyse to better understand reading habits and preferences. In addition, FundZa is able to survey readers. Data from these surveys were used for the external evaluation conducted by the *University of Cape Town´s Institute for Monitoring and Evaluation*. These are some of the key findings from the study:

1. The results suggest that visits to the FundZa site increase the amount and frequency of self-reported reading. This does not depend on pre-existing resources at home or in the community, but is a function of the visits themselves.
2. The proportion of respondents reading stories on mobile phones increases the longer they are enrolled in the Growing Communities of Readers programme.
3. The more participants read (according to objective measures of reading behaviour), the more likely they were to indicate that they enjoyed reading outside of school in the most recent month.

4. The study showed small but significant changes in the desired direction, with respondents reporting that they: have more books at home; read more books outside of school; read more frequently and for longer; prefer reading books over other activities; and consider themselves better readers.

Finally, FundZa receives feedback from all workshop and mentorship participants in its Developing Young Writers programme. FundZa collects the feedback and it is passed on to writers to inform the development of their work. There are plans to independently evaluate this feedback to ascertain whether measurable changes in writing ability can be observed. A future study will take place in 2015/16.

A FundZa mentee wrote:

> *I would like to thank the* FundZa *team for giving me the opportunity to showcase my talent. Being in the* FundZa *Fanz was a learning curve for me and Third Avenue is my play. At first I didn't think I would get this far, but thanks to* FundZa *for their perseverance and support. May God Bless you guys and continue what you are doing.*

A participant in FundZa's Branding Me workshop said:

> *It was valuable because it helped me to get to know difficult words and, with role-playing interviews, to match descriptive words with professions.*

Positive feedback was also received from the *Writing Better Essays workshop* run for teachers in the rural Eastern Cape. Natalie Koenig of Axium commented:

> *Practical training always wins, and when* FundZa *came to the Eastern Cape, they brought practicality in a big way! The printed resources shared at the teacher's training in Qunu were user-friendly, filled with needed examples, and the activities that were facilitated could be used in the classroom without needing anything that teachers didn't already have – or wouldn't be able to make easily.* FundZa *showed teachers how they could use the resources that were accessible to them with great results!*

PROGRAMME IMPACT

IMPACTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Since 2011, FundZa has grown a large community of readers within its target audience of 13 to 25 year olds from under-resourced communities. FundZa reaches, on average, 50,000 readers via its mobi network every month. The network receives more than 100 comments daily and boasts an average visit duration of 14 minutes per session – demonstrating deep engagement with the stories.

Over and above this, FundZa has commissioned the creation of local content that is highly engaging and relevant for young South Africans. It has produced at least one new mobi story per week for the last two and half years, which has resulted in an extremely well-resourced 'library on a phone'.

FundZa has also grown its pool of writing talent, with around 40 writers paid for their seven-chapter stories on the site. A couple of the mentored writers are now professional FundZa writers and their stories are among the most popular on the site.

FundZa is very proud of its achievements and the wide recognition it has received in a relatively short space of time. This includes:

- Selection as one of 15 finalists for the 2014 World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) awards.
- Selection as one of five finalists for the Microsoft Tech Awards 2014.
- FundZa's head Mignon Hardie's selection as finalist in the Association of MBAs' Entrepreneurial Venture 2013 Award, as well as for the Regional Businesswomen's Association Award (social entrepreneurship category) 2014.
- Recognition as one of the 2013 Nominet Trust Top 100 – one of 100 best examples of social tech innovation in the world.
- Selection of FundZa's mobi network as an official project of the World Design Capital 2014.
- The US *Library of Congress's* selection of FundZa as a semi-finalist in their *Literacy Awards 2013* and its inclusion in its Best Practises publication.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Funding is one of the major constraints facing the project as it places a limit on what is achievable in terms of the development of technology as well as the internal capacity to further cultivate the programmes. FundZa has seven staff members who work hard to develop content, distribute books, manage ICT resources, maintain partnerships and sustain relationships with funders. To scale up further and have even greater impact, additional funding will be required.

FundZa is planning to offer its services across other technology platforms. In addition, there are plans to further enhance the interactivity of the various platforms to deepen the reader experience and further incentivize reading for pleasure. Another challenge concerns content development. The more local content the programme can develop, the better able it is to meet the needs of readers. The plan is to develop more non-fiction content that appeals to a more male audience. This would be contained within a separate portal (Fundi FundZa).

There is a further challenge to link the content produced to the formal education curriculum and to encourage the education department to use these resources inside or outside the classroom.

One of the main lessons learned has been that once readers get into the habit of reading, they want more and more content. As a result, FundZa is trying to supply greater quantities of content than ever before.

SUSTAINABILITY

FundZa´s Building for Sustainable Impact programme provides the basis from which its outreach programmes operate. It is essential for FundZa´s development that all aspects of sustainability are considered and implemented. These include ensuring corporate governance compliance, financial reporting, fundraising, advocacy, stakeholder relations, marketing to develop a growing readership and supporter base, and strategy development.

FundZa focuses on developing a demand for reading and, by developing young writers too, it is able to complete the circle, ensuring embedded sustainability of demand and supply.

Readers receive most of the content at no cost, but are reminded of the value and cost of providing the reading material through FundZa´s in-app donation facility. Their steady stream of micro-donations is an important acknowledgement of their recognition of the value of reading.

FundZa is developing financial sustainability beyond donor funding, by leveraging its large user-base in order to develop partnerships with commercial enterprises that recognize the value of connecting with FundZa´s readership.

Regular communication – with its beneficiary groups, readers and writers – through newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, its own mobi network and traditional media ensures that FundZa is able to firmly embed its relationship with its community to ensure sustainability. FundZa also develops awareness by ensuring regular media coverage and attending conferences and events. It has presented at more than ten conferences and seminars, locally and abroad, during 2013/14.

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Innovative Library Services for Vulnerable Children and Youth

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population 14,539,000

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Innovative Library Services for Vulnerable Children and Youth
Implementing organization
Lubuto Library Project, Inc. (LLP)
Language of instruction
Bemba, Nyanja, Lozi, Tonga, Kaonde, Luvale, Lunda, English
Funding
World Vision through the multi-donor All Children Reading Programme, Comic Relief, Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), private sector and individual donors.
Programme partners
Zambia Library Service, Fountain of Hope, Matantala Rural Integrated Development Enterprise
Annual programme costs
USD 232,315 (In 2012)

Date of inception
2005

COUNTRY CONTEXT

According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2014), although Zambia is close to achieving the universal access to primary school target of 97 per cent, the quality of education is still a big concern for the country. According to the previous report, in Zambia 91 per cent of children aged 7 or 8 years are not able to read a word in Bemba, the Language of instruction (Collins et al., 2012). These results are owing to low investment in education, which constitutes an obstacle to the provision of qualified teachers and learning materials. There is only one mathematics textbook for every 3.5 second-graders (UIS, 2012). If

Zambia wants to ensure that all children are attending school and also learning, it should consider reducing class sizes, spending more on classroom and learning materials and recruiting more teachers (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2014). Even if the country had done more to to prevent teacher absenteeism, for example through better access to treatment and allowances for HIV-positive teachers, Zambia would still need to increase its expenditure on education by 35 per cent to recruit the additional primary school teachers it requires (Chetty and Khonyongwa, 2008; UNESCO and Education International EFAIDS, 2007). Adult education is also a challenge since less than half of women aged 15 to 24 had completed lower secondary school in 2007, compared with its neighbour Zimbabwe where 75 per cent of women of the same age had. This progress meant Zimbabwe was able to reduce its HIV infection rate four times faster than Zambia (Halperin et al., 2011). People of working age with disabilities are the most disadvantaged as only 43 per cent completed primary school, while 57 per cent of those with no disabilities have been able to do it.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

In order to address education quality, the Lubuto Library Project (LLP) provides quality educational opportunities for children and youth in Zambia through open-access libraries with carefully crafted book collections and holistic educational, cultural and community programmes. Established in 2005, LLP has built three public libraries that are free and open to the public, but are designed for children, and spefically target children excluded from formal education, including youth living on the streets and children in extreme and desperate poverty. In 2013, the two established Lubuto libraries received more than 80.000 visits.

LLP was founded and is supported by dedicated professional librarians, who work diligently to provide comprehensive and relevant book collections and ensure the Lubuto libraries serve as cultural, educational and

... can be read together in the libraries or on the streets during outreach

A single book in the library...

... can spark discussion and teach values in Lubuto*Mentoring*

Rosa

... can be used for inspiration in Lubuto*Arts*

INTEGRATED PROGRAMMES REINFORCE OUTCOMES

... can be acted out in Lubuto*Drama*

social hubs for young people. Each Lubuto library is owned and managed together with a local partner organization that shapes how the Lubuto library will fit into their community. These partnerships dramatically increase LLP's capability to reach severely disadvantaged youth and expand its model across the country in a sustainable, locally owned way. Each library host is responsible for staffing and managing their library, while the Lubuto Library Project takes responsibility for training staff and providing professional development. Staff and volunteers are typically local librarians, teachers and even adults who grew up on the streets, benefited from Lubuto library services and have returned to give back to the children visiting the library today.

Lubuto libraries are an ideal platform for a wide variety of programmes. They draw on library collections and are purposefully linked to be mutually reinforcing, taking into consideration educational, emotional and

social development from early childhood into the transition to adulthood. These activities are:

LubutoStorytime: Reading and read-aloud sessions, essential components for literacy development, are carried out daily by library staff , teachers, regular volunteers and library visitors, as well as by and among the children and adolescents themselves.Storytelling, which draws from Zambia's oral culture and is a traditional method of early childhood education, is also a vital aspect of this programme. Stories, enacted at library openings and storytelling events, can be told in any language.

LubutoMentoring: This programme addresses the psychosocial support and life skills training needs of vulnerable youth by teaching values and offering counselling and guidance in the Lubuto libraries. Sessions are conducted in Zambian languages and combine group discussion with storytelling, a traditional way through

which values are passed between generations, directly connecting young people to their roots and society.

LubutoArts: is a weekly visual arts training programme that serves as a means of communication and self-expression for young people. Participants develop their talents and have exhibited and sold their artwork in Zambia and internationally.

LubutoDrama: Lubuto libraries offer a twice-weekly performing arts programme of drama, improvisation, and adapting books and stories for performance.

LubutoLaptops: A popular Lubuto library programme since February 2009, Lubuto libraries provide access to the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) XO laptops for children to build writing, typing and logical skills through technology.

LubutoLiteracy: Children learn to read most effectively when they are taught in their mother tongues. In partnership with the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (MESVTEE), Zambian literacy experts adapted reading lessons from the Government curriculum in the seven major Zambian languages and talented young people from Lubuto libraries were contracted to create 100 computer-based reading lessons in each language – 700 lessons in total. The open-source lessons were created on Lubuto's OLPC laptops as a pilot, but have now been reinvented for a more versatile HTML5 platform.

Lubuto's programme is also signficiant for its strong ties to Zambia and Zambia's heritage and languages. Along with the LubutoLiteracy Lessons, Lubuto libraries aim to collect 100 per cent of what is written

Lubuto Library Project, 2013. Zambian teaching and learning materials for the digital age.

for children in Zambian languages, and have compiled a digital repository of out-of-print Zambian stories at lubutocollections.org, preserving important literary heritage for future generations.

USE OF ICT

The structure of the Lubuto libraries themselves is the foundation for all of these innovative programmes. The libraries are designed to reflect traditional Zambian architecture and preserve and restore the culture and lauguages of Zambia. Following the traditional pattern of home steads in Zambia, outside seating and spaces between the buildings create forums for performances and social gatherings. The largest building, the reading room, houses the book collection and features reading alcoves and a central 'talking circle' for reading, teaching, storytelling, group activities and performing. The arts and activities building accommodates the visual arts programme, computers and writing activities. The entrance insaka, a gazebo-like structure traditionally used for social gatherings, features a sink where users can wash their hands before entering the other buildings, and also serves as a meeting and communication space that is ideal for drama and storytelling.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the Lubuto Library Project is to provide vulnerable youth an opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills that will reconnect them with their culture and community, and empower them to participate fully in society. To achieve this, specific objectives include:

- To provide access to child-/youth-friendly, culture-specific and well-equipped libraries as nonformal learning environments.
- To support holistic development and empowerment of vulnerable children and youth.
- To increase local capacity to provide quality educational services and support to children and young people .

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF LIBRARY STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Each Lubuto library is hosted and operated by a partner organization already serving children and youth. The hosts agree, through a memorandum of understanding, to provide and support the individu-

Lubuto Library Project, 2013. Empowering youth through integrated library programming.

als who staff the libraries, and it is the Lubuto Library Project's responsibility to provide initial and ongoing inservice training to the staff. Each library has a minimum of three full-time staff, and Lubuto assists with recruiting and training volunteers and assistants to additionally support library operations. The number of volunteers at any one library varies, but there are usually several volunteers working with each library at any given time. In addition to host organization partners, Lubuto partners with other organizations whose staff or volunteers offer enrichment programmes at the libraries. Lubuto's drama and art programmes are supported through partnerships with two local arts organizations. A partnership with another education-focused NGO provides a regular supply of volunteers to read aloud to children or monitor computer use.

The Department of Library Studies at the University of Zambia sends students on attachment to the libraries to learn about children's library services. Lubuto works with this department to help them develop formal training in children/teen services which didn't exist before. The first initiative resulted in a one-year posting to the department of a Fulbright professor with a children's services specialization. Now Lubuto's experts are working with them to develop a short course in children's and Lubuto library services to provide formal education to future Lubuto librarians.

ENROLMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Outreach is a central component of the Lubuto Library Project programme. Lubuto targets orphans and vulnerable children and youth living in Zambia, and works hard to ensure there are no barriers among youth in the library. Lubuto staff go out on to the streets of Lusaka regularly (over 100 times in 2013 alone) for storytime and music sessions, extending the work beyond the library walls and inviting all to the libraries. Drama and special holiday programmes also bring in audiences of hundreds of children who continue to visit the library afterwards. Once children see all that is on offer in the libraries they enthusiastically join in and return again and again, bringing their friends along as well. The libraries and their programmes are nearly always filled to capacity.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In order to ensure Lubuto libraries are as accessible to youth as possible they are purposefully not like schools and do not require children to register, enrol, or pay fees to use them. As a result, LLP does not keep a lot of data on each individual user of its libraries. Instead, it collects information about how many visits the libraries get, participation in its programmes, and the feedback and stories of youth who have been visiting the libraries for years and take on leadership responsibilities for their upkeep. Some tools are used to ensure the data collected are consistent and accurate, such as:

1. Beneficiary information sheet to capture age, gender, schooling status, living situation, etc, which is updated annually.
2. Beneficiary observation sheet to capture observations about individual children and young people completed by librarians and library supervisors.
3. Library observation sheet to capture how the libraries and their collections are being used.
4. Programme tracking sheets for each individual programme (e.g. LubutoArts, LubutoMentoring).
5. Laptop use log to track use of the OLPC laptops and LubutoLiteracy lessons.
6. Referral forms including a school referral form for tracking individual children and young people assisted to enrol, re-enrol or get remedial assistance at school, and a social service referral form for tracking individual children and young people referred to other needed services.
7. Qualitative tools including group discussions to gather feedback from key stakeholders, such as parents/caregivers, teachers and school officials, government representatives and civil society partners.

In 2013, an external, formative evalution of the Lubuto Library Project was conducted by a South African organization called Rights2Change. The evaluation largely focused on the Lubuto staff structure and partner organizations, but also included many in-depth interviews with library beneficiaries. The evaluation states: 'All beneficiaries who took part in the formative evaluation study related positive changes they had experienced from attending the programmes at the libraries. Changes had also been observed by community members, parents and teachers.' The study concluded that 'It is clear from the findings that the Lubuto libraries are effective in leading to positive change experiences for beneficiaries.'

IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

Lubuto faces challenges in replicating its model across Zambia, where necessary infrastructure is not always available. The Lubuto libraries still do not have regular internet connectivity which limits the services and resources they can offer. Managing construction for the third library, in rural Nabukuyu, required frequent transportation to and from Lusaka, and since most future Lubuto libraries are envisioned for rural areas, the distance from the capital city increases construction

costs. Lubuto wants to expand the training and support offered to library staff, volunteers and teachers, while raising overall awareness throughout Southern Africa about the role public libraries can play in international development. Uneven donor support causes planning challenges for a small organization such as Lubuto, though recent strong endorsement by government is attracting new private and public sector interest.

While many achievements are ongoing, Lubuto libraries continue to make a tremendous impact on the youth who visit them. Based on the interviews conducted with 130 children and young people in 2012, LLP programmes have been refined. All of respondents cited at least one positive change they have experienced since they began visiting Lubuto libraries, while 87 per cent gave very positive and lengthy explanations about the immense impact of Lubuto libraries on their lives. Children and young people confirmed they had improved reading skills (most common response), increased confidence, developed social skills, avoided bad company, reduced hours in front of the TV, and improved classroom performance. Focus groups with their parents and caregivers have corroborated these findings. Many of these children and young people,

Lubuto Library Project, 2013. Empowering youth through integrated library programming.

who started using Lubuto libraries years ago, are now young adults who have become LLP volunteers to help new generations.

Schools close to the Lubuto libraries, have also benefitted from LLP as they can bring their classes and use the resources to supplement classroom teaching. In fact, LLP actively reaches out to teachers and school managers to encourage them to use the libraries and give them ideas about how the libraries can support their work. This activity was spearheaded by Lubuto's library services adviser, who has instituted formal orientation and training sessions for teachers in which they are introduced to library books and computer resources that support the curriculum. Teachers are especially receptive to using the LubutoLiteracy lessons to supplement their classroom work in teaching reading in children's mother tongues. The community benefits from library events and activities such as public drama performances as well.

LLP has also supported the library profession in Zambia by offering placements in Lubuto libraries to students from the University of Zambia who can learn about library services for children and youth.

Lubuto Library Project, 2014

All of the above impacts have helped to revitalize existing library services and raised the visibility of Zambia Library Services (ZLS) and the ministry's efforts to improve the quality of education in Zambia. In 2012, the two Lubuto libraries received about 100,000 visits, with an additional 1,000 children taking part in LLP's structured programmes, such as LubutoDrama, LubutoArts and LubutoMentoring.

TESTIMONIES

Female programme participant, age 15
"In all the Lubuto programmes, we learn about life skills and how to make good decisions. I started reflecting about my life."

Beneficiary at the Ngwerere Lubuto Library
"I have learned a lot about positive attitude. I used to do bad things... I never used to listen to anyone advising me due to peer pressure. Now, I have changed for the best."

LESSONS LEARNED

Over the years, Lubuto leadership and staff have learned a great deal about what works and what they need to do to accomplish outcomes such as these. They have learned to draw on local expertise and technology. Lubuto has learned that many internationally donated resources (for example, laptops) don't have the same sustainability and flexibility as those provided by local ICT institutions. Lubuto has continued to modify the design of its libraries to fit with the needs of visitors. The third library, in Nabukuyu, is the first to have a fourth building for teenagers and teenage library services, drawing on the observation that older library users would like their own space to enjoy books and programmes, and for socialization.

Lubuto has also learned how to best choose and work with the organizations which host Lubuto libraries. While many excellent organizations and institutions across Zambia express interest in a Lubuto library, many are not willing to open the libraries up to the public. Because the reach and accessibility of our libraries is essention to the Lubuto model, Lubuto has learned to seek out strong host organizations deeply rooted in their communities with commitement to its mission of providing opportunities such as these for all children.

SUSTAINABILITY

In 2012, LLP was awarded a grant from the All Children Reading programme (an initiative of USAID, AusAID and World Vision, see www.allchildrenreading.org) to roll out the programme at national level and in other African countries. In 2014, with the support of Comic Relief and ZLS, a third Lubuto Library was opened in Zambia's Southern Province which seeks to reach the most dis-advantaged children, young people and communities who have limited access to electricity and internet and typically do not benefit from technology-supported projects. Local library host organizations, Fountain of Hope, the Ministry of Education and Matantala Rural Integrated Development Enterprise, have provided resources that support low-cost, continuing operations, and help ensure sustainability. Our future library hosts will do the same.

When constructing the libraries, LLP uses locally-sourced labour and materials, to reflect the architectural model of Zambia, making libraries very cost-effective and ensuring low maintenance costs. Partnership with the ministry and ZLS also supports the long-term institutional sustainability of Lubuto libraries as ZLS has the mandate and organizational framework in place to provide library services nationally, and Lubuto libraries will both benefit from and strengthen these. In addition, coordination between Lubuto libraries and government plans, standards and programmes ensures efficiency and relevance, and recognizes that government support is essential to sustainability. Interest in the model from other countries in the region (particularly Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe) has been steadily growing in recent years, and LLP receives a constant flow of requests from individuals and institutions within and beyond Zambia to support the establishment of Lubuto libraries in their communities.

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Community Library and Resource Centres

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population
29,331,000

Official languages
Nepali (regional languages: Maithili, Nepal Bhasa, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Gurung, Tamang, Magar, Awadhi, Sherpa, Kiranti, Limbu, etc.)

Poverty
(Population living on less than 1.25 USD per day)
24.8%

Total expenditure on education as % of GNP
4.7%

Primary school net enrolment/attendance
97.7% (2014)

Total youth literacy rate (15–24 years)
(2011) Total: 82.4%; Male: 89.2%; Female: 77.5%

Adult literacy rate (15 years and over, 1995–2005)
(2011) Total: 57.4%; Male: 71.1%; Female: 46.7%

Sources
- UNESCO: EFA Global Monitoring Report
- UNICEF: Information by country
- World Bank: World Development Indicators database

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Community Library and Resource Centres

Implementing organization
READ Nepal (international NGO)

Language of instruction
Nepali and other local languages (bilingual)

Programme partners
READ Global; the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Pew Charitable Trusts; Myths and Mountains; the Nepal Library Foundation (NLF); Rotary International; International Reading Association; One World South Asia; Pacific Asia Travel Association; UNESCO; German Embassy; Norwegian Association for Adult Learning; Town Development Fund; Government of Nepal.

Date of inception
1991

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Despite Nepal's developmental progress in recent years, socioeconomic inequalities continue to plague the country. About a third of its population, mostly from isolated rural and semi-urban communities, live below the poverty line with limited access to basic socio-economic support and opportunities. The combined effects of poverty, geographic remoteness and general lack of development also prevents many rural people, particularly women, ethnic minorities (Janajatis) and low caste groups (Dalits), from accessing quality education. The provision of quality education to the poor majority is further impeded by a paucity of educational resources, inadequate infrastructure and a lack of qualified teachers. As a result, about 25 per cent of the total population (or 8 million people) are illiterate. Adult illiteracy rates (51 per cent as of 1995 to 2005) are particularly alarming. In addition, gender inequity is profound with only one-quarter of all women minimally literate, a phenomenon which exacerbates rural poverty and underdevelopment. In response to these extreme challenges, Rural Education and Development (READ) Nepal — a pioneering non-governmental organization for community development through community library and resource centres — instituted the Community Library and Resource Centres (CLRC) programme in an effort to empower socially disadvantaged and marginalized communities through educational and developmental projects.

THE COMMUNITY LIBRARY AND RESOURCE CENTRES PROGRAMME

The CLRC programme was officially launched in 1991, the very year that READ-Nepal was officially established in the country. Under the programme, READ-Nepal, with financial and technical assistance from its parent-body, READ-Global, the government of Nepal (through the District Education Office) and various international NGOs, establishes community libraries and resource centres (CLRCs) in partnership with local communities. The CLRCs are used as focal points for the implementation of community-based educational and developmental programmes. In addition, READ-Nepal also equips the centres with buildings, learning materials (books, computers, children's toys, newspapers and magazines) and furniture. It also trains the library management committees (LMCs) which are entrusted with the responsibility of managing the CLRCs and for coordinating the implementation of centre-based educational and developmental activities. READ-Nepal also assists the LMCs and community members to identify, initiate/establish and manage projects which generate money for family needs and for the sustenance of the CLRCs.

To date, READ-Nepal has established 48 self-sustaining and community-managed CLRCs and 13 outreach projects in 37 districts across the entire country, some of which are equipped with over 9,000 books (minimum 3,000) and various other learning materials and resources. In addition to functioning as warehouses of learning resources and information, the CLRCs also act as focal points for educational training activities for community members of all ages. As indicated in the pictures below, READ-Nepal provides early child-

hood education (ECE) and basic literacy programmes for children as well as basic literacy and life skills training to youths and adults. READ's life skills programme for youths and adults places greater emphasis on subjects or themes that are central for both individual and community developmental needs. These include:

- Health (HIV/AIDS awareness; reproductive health; nutrition and sanitation).
- Civic education (human rights, conflict resolution and management; peace building; gender and racial relations).
- Environmental management and conservation.
- Income generation or livelihood development, including agricultural training (bee keeping; fish production, crop and animal production) and craft, soap, furniture and candle making.

READ-supported CLRCs are also playing a leading role in empowering women in the community. CLRCs provide space for women to interact and discuss issues. They also conduct programmes according to their particular needs, for example, micro finance, skill development training, leadership-building training and computer training.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
The READ programme endeavours to:

- combat illiteracy in the country particularly among the socially disadvantaged and marginalized rural and peri-urban communities;
- provide communities with contextually relevant reading and learning materials or information in order to promote lifelong learning, social development and empowerment;
- nurture an intergenerational reading or learning culture through the establishment of self-sustaining community library and resource centres;
- promote rural economic development by creating basic educational and vocational skills training opportunities for all and supporting sustainable income-generation activities;
- enable socially disadvantaged communities to participate more effectively in community and national developmental processes;
- combat rural poverty;
- promote social cohesion.

Jhuwani Community Library

Overall, the programme endeavours to diminish the isolation, vulnerability and marginality in which many Nepalese citizens live.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION: APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

READ-Nepal harnesses the local community as central agents in the implementation of the programme. Hence, as noted above, READ-Nepal assists communities to establish income-generating projects of their choice. These projects are used to generate funds necessary for family subsistence, the maintenance of the CLRCs and programme implementation. In addition, READ-Nepal has also mobilized, trained and entrusted the LMCs with the responsibility of ensuring the effective implementation of the programme. Apart from managing the centres and coordinating the educational and income-generating activities, the LMCs are also responsible for identifying and recruiting programme facilitators, mobilizing resources and engaging community members to participate in programme activities.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF FACILITATORS

READ-Nepal, through the LMCs, has recruited some 92 community-based programme facilitators/librarians throughout the country. READ has conducted 77 training sessions for 1,749 community participants. In most cases, facilitators/librarians are recruited from and assigned to the libraries and resource centres within their own communities. As a rule, facilitators/librarians are expected to have a minimum educational qualification of Grade 10 in order to be engaged as programme instructors. Facilitators receive a monthly stipend of at least NPR 3,000 raised from the income-generating projects of the library.

READ-Nepal, in partnership with the national District Education Office provides facilitators/librarians with ongoing training in basic library management, project development and management, early childhood education (ECE) and adult literacy/education (AL/E). With regards to ECE and AL/E, facilitators receive training in, for example:

- child- and adult-appropriate teaching/learning methods;
- management of community library and resource centres as community development centres;
- classroom management;
- how to use teaching modules to conduct lessons as well as to moderate the learning process;
- local content production, management and dissemination training.

After receiving training, facilitators are expected to run the centres and provide literacy and vocational training assistance to learners or participants. Each facilitator is assigned a maximum of 25 learners. The 'low' facilitator-learner ratio is intended to enable facilitators to provide learners with the individual attention and assistance necessary for optimum skills acquisition. In addition, facilitators also play a critical role in mobilizing community members to participate in the programme.

RECRUITMENT OF LEARNERS OR PARTICIPANTS

READ-Nepal, the LMCs and programme facilitators/librarians employ various strategies to encourage potential learners to enrol on the programme. These include:

- public awareness campaigns (through announcements in public places and at social gatherings);
- public advertisements in pamphlets, local media;
- community advocacy by programme participants.

TEACHING/LEARNING APPROACHES AND METHODS

Although the CLRCs are accessible to any community member who wishes to consolidate or advance their literacy skills, the programme also provides formal ECE and AL/E classes. To date, about 1 million people have benefitted from the programme since its establishment in 1991. Of these, about 5,061 are children enrolled into the ECE classes annually.

ECE classes are run for children between two-and-a-half and four-and-a-half years old. They come to the library until they go school – for at least one year – for six hours per day. Adult literacy classes are undertaken over a period of three months. Thereafter, participants/learners are free to use the learning resources in the libraries to consolidate their skills. In addition, programme facilitators are also on hand to provide ongoing assistance to programme participants and other community members who visit the resource centres. Neo-literates are engaged in the programmes conducted by CLRCs to make sure that their literacy skills are used and upgraded.

READ-Nepal employs a participatory and learner-centred approach to both literacy and vocational skills instruction. Accordingly, the teaching/learning process is largely based on active group discussions/debates, simulations, practical work and question-and-answer strategies. Most importantly, READ-Nepal also encourages facilitators to use locally available learning resources, including those made by the learners/participants themselves.

PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT: IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

READ-Nepal employs both internal and external professionals to monitor and evaluate programme activities and learning outcomes on an ongoing basis. To date, the CLRC programme has been subject to two evaluation studies, by the Social Welfare Council and the International Reading Association.

IMPACT

According to the aforementioned studies, the CLRC programme has made significant contributions to individual and community development in Nepal in general and, more specifically, to socially disadvantaged and marginalized members of society. As noted above, about 1 million people of all age groups have benefitted from the programme since its inception in 1991. Young children have been helped to acquire basic literacy skills before being enrolled on the formal primary school system while, on the other hand, youths and adults have benefitted from basic literacy and vocational skills training. The centres themselves have become vital focal points for lifelong learning,

not least because they are open for continuous usage by all members of the community. This has led to an increase in the overall literacy rates within rural communities. In addition, the studies also revealed that:

- The programme has created opportunities for community members to find solutions to common challenges afflicting their families and communities. In so doing, the programme is therefore acting as a critical catalyst for community development and social empowerment. Most importantly, the programme is an avenue for the social emancipation of women, ethnic minorities (Janajatis) and low caste groups (Dalits).
- The programme fosters a culture of intergenerational learning and, as a result, parents are now more inclined and better able to assist their children with their school work. This, combined with the values of education that the programme instils in both children and their parents, has resulted in high school attendance/enrolment rates and lower drop-out rates.
- Establishment of income-generating projects: as noted above, the programme has assisted community members to establish a variety of income-generating projects. Loan and savings clubs have also been established to assist community members to generate more income for projects. These projects/activities have been critical in combating rural poverty as well as in sustaining the CLRCs. In addition, the projects have also created employment opportunities for other community members, an aspect which has contributed to rural development and combating rural-to-urban migration.

CHALLENGES

The studies also revealed the following challenges:

- The growth of income-generating projects is being impeded by a weak local market. It is therefore imperative for READ-Nepal to assist community members to break into new markets.
- The provision of literacy skills training is very limited. One report asserted that 'we found little evidence for literacy training courses at any of the libraries we visited. Management team members indicated a number of difficulties: finding funding for literacy teachers, lack of access to workbooks or

literacy training materials, as well as lack of communication with the school district, all seemed to provide too many hurdles for local community members'.

■ Relevance of books in the centres: 'Many of the books currently indexed in the library have been donated by outsiders, and are unattractive, inaccessible (due to language), and take up valuable space. READ should encourage librarians to screen these books (for example, many old textbooks in areas as varied as statistics, and outdated histories)'. Additionally, the majority of books are in English and on topics that are not at all of interest to patrons.

SUSTAINABILITY

Apart from the assured long-term funding form READ-Nepal's partners, the future of the programme is also assured because it is community-owned and the community, through the established income-generating projects, contributes towards the sustenance of the CLRCs. In addition, the support of the government is invaluable for the long-term sustainability of the programme.

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My Grandparents' Stories, My Pictures

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population
29,331,000

Official language
Nepali (regional languages: Maithili, Nepal Bhasa, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Gurung, Tamang, Magar, Awadhi, Sherpa, Kiranti, Limbu, etc.)

Poverty
(Population living on less than 1.25 USD per day)
24.8%

Total expenditure on education as % of GNP
4.7%

Primary school net enrolment/attendance
97.7% (2014)

Total youth literacy rate (15–24 years)
(2011) Total: 82.4%; Male: 89.2%; Female: 77.5%

Adult literacy rate (15 years and over, 1995–2005)
(2011) Total: 57.4%; Male: 71.1%; Female: 46.7%

Sources
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- UNICEF: Information by country
- World Bank: World Development Indicators database

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
My Grandparents' Stories, My Pictures

Implementing organization
READ Nepal (international NGO)

Language of instruction
Nepali

Programme partners
Nepalese Society for Children's Literature (NESCHIL), MandapikaTheatre Group, Jhuwani CLRC, Laxminarayan CLRC, Janajagaran CLRC, Gyanbikash CLRC, RIRC model centre

Annual programme costs
USD 21,000

Date of inception
March 2014

COUNTRY CONTEXT

With more than half of its population of 27 million people living on less than US $2 per day, Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world. The road density of Nepal is very low with more than half of the rural population living more than half an hour away from the nearest all-weather road. More than 60 per cent of the rural population have no access to electricity and depend on oil-based or renewable energy alternatives. Nepal has also witnessed considerable political instability, with the country making a transition to peace following a period of conflict that ended in 2006. The conflict raised people's awareness of the failure of Nepal's political, social and economic institutions to reflect the country's diversity. Nepal is a highly diverse country not only geographically but also in terms of language, religion, culture, caste and ethnicity. Besides the Official language of Nepali, some 92 other languages are spoken in Nepal.

Education planning and management at all levels are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (MoE). In 1999 the MoE established the Department of Education (DoE), which now controls the five regional district offices and is responsible for implementing and monitoring educational programmes. Furthermore, the Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC) was founded in 1993, under the MoE, in order to institutionalize programmes of non-formal education. Despite this, the high rate of illiteracy in the country remains a challenge, especially among adults. The total Adult literacy rate in 2011 was 57.4 per cent, with a significant gap between women, at 46.7 per cent, and men, at 71.1 per cent. With an estimated 7.6 million adults unable to read or write, the Nepalese government needs to develop innovative approaches to promote literacy among its adult population.

IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION

READ is a non-profit organization working in rural Asia to build community library and resource centres (READ centres) and launch small businesses. The READ centres offer programmes in education, economic empowerment, technology and women's empowerment. All 79 centres are owned and operated by the local community. Each has a library, computer room, women's section, children's room, and training hall. With each READ centre, the organization helps develop a for-profit 'sustaining enterprise', a small business that creates local jobs and generates profit to support the ongoing costs of the centre. Sustaining enterprises range from tractor rental services and agricultural cooperatives, to community radio stations and sewing cooperatives. Since 1991, the READ model has evolved from the idea of a rural library to a thriving network of READ centres and sustaining enterprises in Bhutan, India and Nepal.More than 2 million people have access to READ centres and their training activities.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

Nepal has a unique historical and cultural heritage. For centuries, the history of Nepal has been transmitted from generation to generation through oral storytelling: the passing on stories about culture, livelihood and the natural environment. Yet, as Nepalese society modernizes and globalizes, this practise has begun to recede.

Stories are forgotten, traditional dances blend with more modern ones, and local histories are lost. To preserve the endangered oral heritage of rural communities, READ staff in Nepal developed a project called My Grandparents' Stories, My Pictures, which was implemented in five READ centres across the country. Elders from five communities in Nepal were selected for the project because of their extensive knowledge of historical events and endangered cultural practises. They gathered at their local READ centre libraries – the Jhuwani READ centre in Chitwan, Laxminarayan centre in Lamjung, Janajagaran centre in Nuwakot, the Gyanbikash centre in Panauti, Kavre, and the Read Information and Resource Centre (RIRC) model READ centre in Badikhel. These centres were selected because they are are rich in terms of culture, myth, tradition and history.

At the centres, the elders participated in workshops on storytelling led by the Nepalese Society for Children's Literature (NESCHIL). NESCHIL is an independent literary organization established in 1987 to promote reading activities which bring together writers, illustrators, librarians, teachers and experts involved in children's activities. After the workshops, groups of 20 local children from each village met at the READ centres to listen to the elders telling their stories. The young people created a written record of the stories and made illustrations to accompany them. The stories were compiled into five illustrated storybooks, published, and returned to the community libraries as permanent records.

As traditional arts such as painting, dance, music and drama have always been integral to the telling and re-telling of stories in Nepal, the communities also developed theatre programmes to act out the stories.

The project began in March 2014 and ended in December 2014.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the project were to:

- inform the community about Nepalese history, culture and traditions;
- preserve the cultural heritage of the community;
- enhance children's creative story writing and illustration skills;
- promote a reading and writing culture among children;
- build cross-generational relationships;
- increase the community's engagement and involvement in library activities.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The following activities were carried out in each READ centre throughout the project:

a. **Meeting with the library management committee (LMC) and project orientation.** At an agreed date and time, circulated to the library management committee beforehand, staff from READ Nepal and NESCHIL met with the LMC to introduce the project. There was then an opportunity for doubts and queries to be raised and addressed. A short orientation was provided to LMC members on project activities and objectives. The process of identifying children and community elders was also discussed in the meeting.

b. **Identification of children.** The library identified and invited children who were regular visitors. It also contacted schools in the area to identify children who could write and illustrate well. A group of 20 children was selected from each centre for storybook making (10 for illustration and 10 for writing). Children who visited the centre's children's section frequently and demonstrated an interest in drawing and storytelling were selected, along with students from local schools with an interest in art. These children were involved in writing and illustrating the stories.

c. **Short briefing about the project to children.** Selected children participated in storybook writing and drawing training. A story writing and illustration expert provided a one-day orientation about their role in the project and how to write effectively and illustrate stories using paint, coloured pencils and collages. Samples were provided, and the children were encouraged to create storybooks that accurately reflected their culture and historical context, which is often absent from local children's books.

d. **Identification of community elders.** A group of elders with extensive knowledge of historical events, figures and endangered cultural practises were selected from the community for storytelling. Elders with an interest in storytelling, experience of the old culture, information on heritage matters and knowledge of legend, myth and fable were prioritized. At least 10 elders were identified. The process was carried out with the help of LMC members. After identification, a focus group discussion (FGD) and one-day project orientation were conducted with the elders.

e. **FGD with community elders, project orientation and identification of stories.** An FGD was organized with community elders and a one-day project orientation was provided. Stories about significant and historic events to share with the children were selected during the FGD. The elders suggested stories that explained the origins of important temples, heritage, myths and rituals in their communities, as well as the legends that inspired certain local festivals and holidays. Finally, the stories and the storytellers were selected by the FGD, with the elders acting as the key storytellers for the project.

f. **Short orientation about storytelling.** A short orientation was provided to the elder storytellers by NESCHIL. Orientation on the techniques and processes of storytelling was provided by the expert and the date and venue for the storytelling was finalized. Following orientation, storytellers were able to incorporate important terms and phrases from indigenous languages into their stories.

g. **Training on story writing and illustration for the children.** Two days of training on story writing and illustration were organized by NESCHIL. The 20 selected children were trained in storybook writing and drawing (with 10 in each training). Experts provided training in writing effectively and illustrating stories using paint, colored pencils and collages.

h. **Storytelling, story writing and illustration.** The elders shared their stories with the children in an appropriate place and environment. READ staff and the NESCHIL team facilitated between the three groups (storytellers, story writers and story illustrators). Because the stories shared by elders cannot be found in textbooks or on the internet, the children were encouraged to ask the elders questions about their stories. Some of the children sketched illustrations based on stories, while others wrote the stories down. The stories were also recorded.

i. **Making a draft storybook.** After the storytelling session, the children returned to their table and made a draft storybook, including illustrations, with the help of NESCHIL experts. They used recordings to make the storybooks and the expert provided support, coaching them to develop the draft storybook.

j. **Open discussion with elders on draft storybook.** Following the development of the draft storybook, an open discussion was organized by NESCHIL with the storytellers. Elders who told three different stories reviewed the storybook and made changes or added information.

k. **Final storybook making.** The NESCHIL expert edited the story, redesigned it and refined the illustration to make the storybook ready for publication.

l. **Printing of storybook.** Storybooks were printed in four colors on art paper by READ Nepal, which published 1,200 copies of each of the five books. Further printing can be done according to demand and the desire of potential funders. The storybooks are kept in each READ centre and distributed to interested organizations, such as non-governmental organizations, schools and clubs, and libraries.

m. **Theatre show.** Five theatre shows were performed on library premises or nearby by the Mandapika Theatre Group. One show, based on a storybook, was performed in each centre.

THE STORYBOOKS
The following storybooks were published:

- **Story of Jhuwani Village**
  This story concerns how the name 'Jhuwani' came into existence. Jhuwani is a village in Chitwan district and most of its villagers belong to the Tharu community. The story gives insights into the culture, traditions and language of the residents of Jhuwani.
- **Story of Panauti.**
  The story of Panauti explains the origin of the name 'Panauti'. Panauti is a village in Kavre district and its residents belong to the Newar community. The story decribes the religious myths of the village.
- **Story of Lamjung.**
  The story of Lamjung illustrates the unification process in Nepal. It consists of two different stories: the story of King Drabya Shah and an account of the life of women living in Lamjung district.
- **Story of Badikhel.**
  The story of Badikhel also includes two stories: one narrates the old tales of the community and the other tells how the name 'Badikhel' originated.
- **Story of Chimteshwor.**
  This last publication tells the story of how Chimteshwor village in Nuwakot district got its name.
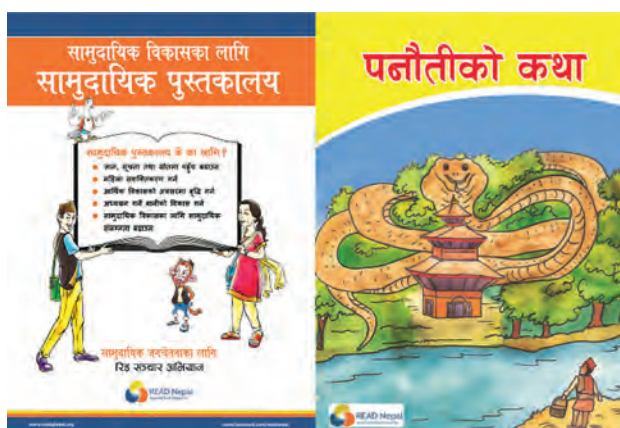
IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

PROJECT EVALUATION
The project made it possible to test different methods and to identify which ones worked best for the storytelling and writing activities. In the same way, it was possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the whole project.

The NESCHIL team practises different storytelling methods: 1) storytelling by a single elder at one time; 2) storytelling by group of elders at same time;

and 3) first listening to a story and then writing and sketching. During implementation it was discovered that the most feasible method was to write drafts as the elders were telling their stories in a group setting.

The project not only helped to preserve stories about the culture of various districts in Nepal but also contributed to closing the gap between two generations and helped to renew relationships. Similarly, the project also worked towards the development of a reading and writing culture among children and elderly people. Children got the chance to develop their creative skills and older people were pleased to share their knowledge and experience. The project also helped to establish a good relationship with the community libraries in the five districts. It also enhanced the relationship between the community elders and the libraries.

The project was welcomed by community members who confirmed that they enjoyed the storytelling and writing sessions. Children and grandparents were proud that their stories and pictures had been published in book format.

CHALLENGES

- Travel expenses to remote districts for partners NESCHIL and Mandapika Theatre Group turned out to be very expensive.
- Difficulty of travelling due to poor weather conditions affected the smooth running of the project.
- It was difficult to decide in favour of just one story in each district. All stories were good quality but the funding situation did not allow for publishing more. The target was to publish five storybook in five centres.

ACHIEVEMENTS

TESTIMONIALS

Hari Sundar Tamrakar, Panauti: *'I found everything in this book. I felt as if I had written this book. The book includes the story of Basuki naag, Macchindra Nath and Patan. I am happy to see this. I have some other stories and I would definitely share those later.'*

Durga Prasad Dhakal, Nuwakot: *'I had not exptected the storybook to turn out to be so good. The storybook has everything that I had heard from my father and all that I had shared with my grandchildren. I am also amazed to see the drama. The drama looks so real and convincing.'*

Bhola Kumar Shrestha, Chief Librarian, Dilli Raman Library: *'Storytelling has been a part of Nepalese culture for centuries with the elders usually telling stories to children … However, with the modernization of Nepalese society and with the use of television, internet, mobile, etc, Nepal is slowly losing the tradition of folkore and storytelling. The culture of storytelling is important to bridge the intergenerational gaps and for strengthening the bond between the generations. So, it is important to preserve the stories, cultures and traditions of communities before they become lost.'*

Navaraj Pahadi, Antaranga National Weekly, Editor: *'This storybook helped to revive the old memories among the elder generations while the new generations got the opportunity to learn the history.'*

Tripti Neupane, Nisha Neupane and Akansha Neupane: *'We learned about the story of Chimteshwor after hearing it from our local elders. The storybook and the drama helped narrate the story more effectively and we love this programme very much.'*

LESSONS LEARNED

During the implementation phase of the project, various lessons were learned which will guide the work of the READ centres in the future. One of the lessons concerned the stories explored during the project. There were several, with different information collected for each, which created confusion about which story should be covered.

It was also found that more funds needed to be allocated to book publishing. Publishing more books lowers the unit cost of printing.

The project promoted the spread of information and the sharing of knowledge. Although there were many stories in the community, they had not been shared and had not, therefore, been heard by young people. Older people love to share stories with the younger generation but they lacked an appropriate time and opportunity to do so. When this changed, it was apparent that the children were very excited not only to listen to the stories, but also to write and illustrate them to create storybooks.

SUSTAINABILITY

READ is in the process of creating a second version of My Grandparents' Stories, My Pictures. The follow-up programme will focus on the earthquake of April 2015 and its aftermath, considering the experience of both generations.

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Adult Female Functional Literacy Programme

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population
181,193,000 (2013)

Official languages
Urdu, Pashto, English, Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi

Poverty
(Population living on less than USD 2.00 per day)
45% (2013)

Total expenditure on education as % of GNP
2.5% (2013)

Access to primary education –
total net intake rate (NIR)
Total: 72.9% (2014); Male: 78.6%; Female: 66.9%

Total youth literacy rate (15–24 years)
Total: 73.7% (2015); Male: 80.2%; Female: 66.8%

Adult literacy rate (15 years and over, 2010–2011)
Total: 56.4% (2015); Male: 69.5%; Female: 42.7%

Sources
■ UNESCO Institute for Statistics

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Adult Female Functional Literacy Programme
Implementing organization
BUNYAD Literacy Community Council (BLCC)
Language of instruction
Urdu
Programme partners
USAID under the Education Sector Reform
Assistance Programme and BLCC

Date of inception
2003

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Despite the considerable progress made in the past few decades towards the provision of basic educational opportunities for all, Pakistan continues to register low levels of literacy. Before 2003, the Adult literacy rate was below 50 per cent (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014), with significant disparities between the literacy levels of women and men. For example, in 1998, the literacy rate for males and females aged 15–24 years was 67 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively. At the same time, the female literacy rate was as low as 29 per cent for adults aged 24 years and above and was believed to be even lower among women in rural areas. By 2015, although the Adult literacy rate had improved to 56 per cent, there was still a 27 per cent gender gap in Pakistan (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014).

In general, access to education for all is hindered by several factors, including poverty and mismanagement in education. *National Geographic* summed up these problems more pointedly: 'It's not unusual in Pakistan to hear of public schools that receive no books, no supplies and no subsidies from the government. Thousands more are "ghost schools" that exist only on paper, to line the pockets of phantom teachers and administrators' (Belt, 2007). Further challenges arise from the political instability and insecurity which limit access to education, particularly for people living in some rural areas, and especially for women.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

BUNYAD Literacy Community Council (BLCC) was formed in 1992 and registered in 1994 as a national non-governmental organization (NGO). Recognizing that development is a multidimensional process, BLCC has adopted a multisectoral approach to the promotion of development in Pakistan. To this end, BLCC is currently implementing a number of diverse yet inter-linked programmes, including literacy and education, health (sanitation, HIV/AIDS awareness, reproductive health), child labour, women's empowerment and poverty alleviation, micro-credit and business development, farming and environment. These programmes are funded by various local and international organizations such as UN agencies (UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP), CIDA, USAID, ILO and local business organizations. While BLCC generally endeavours to assist and empower underprivileged and marginalized communities in Pakistan, the Adult Female Functional Literacy Programme (AFFLP) is specifically tailored to meet the educational needs of rural women (aged between 15 and 25) through the provision of functional literacy training assistance. The overall goal is to empower women in order to enhance their capacity to improve their standard of life.

The AFFLP non-formal education programme is currently being implemented in the sub-district of Daska Markaz (Sialkot District) as part of the USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) programme. Daska Markaz consists of 12 Union Councils (nine rural and three urban) with an estimated 36,186 households. Daska Markaz has limited educational services and, as a result, about 25 per cent of children aged between 8 and 9 years are out of school while 23 per cent of children aged between 10 and 14 years are illiterate. The illiteracy rate is significantly higher for women aged between 15 and 25 years, the majority of whom had no or limited access to basic primary education and are therefore the primary targets of AFFLP. AFFLP is an integrated programme which offers literacy, vocational, business and life skills training as well as civic (human rights, peace building), health (reproductive, HIV/AIDS, nutrition) and agricultural education. BLCC initiated AFFLP, which primarily endeavours to assist women aged between 15 and 25 years to either gain access to education, or resume their studies after failing to continue due to the challenges outlined above.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The project endeavours to:

- improve the basic and functional literacy skills of rural women aged between 15 and 25 years;
- promote poverty eradication through literacy empowerment;
- empower women to make positive contributions to their communities;
- raise health awareness, particularly reproductive, among women;
- raise public awareness of the importance of adult female literacy for community development.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION: APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

The project began in 2003 and was implemented in two phases: Phase 1, September 2003 to December 2004 and Phase 2, January 2005 to April 2006. During these two phases, the project was implemented in 182 villages across the sub-district.

Community Mobilization

BLCC has been working with local communities in Daska Markaz since 1999 and by the time AFFLP was launched strong working partnerships had been established with community leaders and community-based organizations (CBOs). Nonetheless, before the launch of AFFLP, BLCC conducted community-based qualitative and quantitative needs assessments in Daska Markaz. In the process, 5,211 potential programme participants aged between 15 and 25, the majority of whom had never attended school, were interviewed and the results revealed the need to implement literacy training for women. The surveys were also used to communicate the purpose and significance of the literacy project to the community.

Most importantly, the existing social networks enabled BLCC to mobilize community support as well as learners through community-based sensitization and dialogue meetings. For example, BLCC held 101 meetings with community leaders and other influential persons in different locations during which they were briefed about the project: its objectives, the importance of improved female literacy for community development and, most significantly, the importance of their active involvement for the success of the pro-

gramme. Following these meetings, BLCC established Village Education Communities (VEC) and Family Education Communities (FEC). The VECs and FECs were given the responsibility, for example, of identifying and encouraging learners to join the project as well as maintaining and organizing activities relating to ESRA literacy centres in their areas.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

Recruitment of teachers was based on their commitment to education and skills development as well as their teaching experience and qualifications. Two hundred and forty-two teachers were recruited and trained in adult education teaching methodologies, curriculum content and class management and organization. BLCC also conducted monthly follow-up training workshops for teachers.

NEW INITIATIVE: MOBILE RICKSHAW LIBRARIES

In 2013, BUNYAD started a mobile library service through the Mobile Rickshaw Libraries initiative. By August 2016, there were three mobile rickshaw libraries working in the rural districts of Rahim Yar Khan, Hafizabad and Lahore. The libraries are an independent initiative, supporting BUNYAD's existing educational and literacy programmes, in response to the needs of local schools and communities. Limited access to reading opportunities negatively affects both young people and adults in rural Pakistan. Given that students have increased difficulties in retaining their interests in reading and learning, contributing to a situation where around 40 per cent of students drop out of primary schools and adults who have acquired literacy skills lack the opportunity to practise reading, the initiative addresses a direct need for reading material.

The initiative aims to serve students from public and private schools, teachers, members of school councils, women and men, and other community members. Through its service, the project aims to support student retention in primary schools by promoting reading habits among young people and adults, and support women's empowerment by providing relevant reading material for the strengthening of literacy skills.

The mobile rickshaw libraries recruit readers from among learners who have previously graduated from or have attended courses at BUNYAD literacy centres and are motivated to practise their literacy skills through the rickshaw libraries.

The rickshaw libraries reach readers in the three target areas twice each month, with between 300 and 450 printed books available in every library. Reading materials are taken out by students and people in the communities. There is one facilitator in each library to assist learners with registration, keeping track of borrowing records and reading. A flexible membership fee is charged to sustain the project. The fee is waived for learners who cannot afford it and they can read and return books free of charge. To ensure that books are returned by readers, who are often still learning how libraries work, and to develop a sense of ownership among them, the programme asks school heads and school councils to act as guarantors for school students and adult readers.

The libraries cover a wide range of reading materials for students and community members. Printed materials include children's magazines, books on women's empowerment, and other reading material on topics relevant to young people, livestock, local stories and financial skills. However, the uniqueness of the project lies in its use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and its provision of e-learning materials. BUNYAD uses educational websites such as eLearn Punjab, which has been developed and managed by the government of Punjab, to provide learners with online books, guides, short videos and animated explanations of terms and topics. The mobile rickshaw libraries are equipped with laptops and multimedia screens for learners to access the online materials. In areas where there is no internet connection, BUNYAD downloads the materials in advance and saves them in CD form so that learners can read them through laptops.

Other subjects covered by these e-reading materials include agricultural knowledge provided in CD form, gender-responsive multimedia materials developed in such a way that they are easy for adults who have recently acquired literacy skills to use, and animated books designed for young people. Some books are published by BUNYAD and are specifically developed

for the target areas with relevant content. Other available books and materials are collected from various organizations, institutions and philanthropists.

As of July 2016, the project had reached 6,899 students and 761 adult women who had recently acquired literacy skills and had, through this initiative, gained knowledge and skills related to livestock, agriculture, maternal, newborn and child health, and financial skills. It has also created access to reading materials for another 7,584 community members. Project results suggest that participants have developed more interest in reading and independently searching for knowledge. Women have strengthened their decision-making and resource-management skills. Community members have also been mobilized to raise awareness of the importance of education and knowledge as well as to build up community spaces for information-sharing and discussion.

IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring of the project was undertaken on an ongoing basis using the various organizational structures of BLCC. Thus, social/community mobilizers and teachers were responsible for ensuring the learners' continued attendance in classes and progress in acquiring literacy skills. On the other hand, project coordinators and managers were responsible for monitoring the work of the teachers and supervisors and activities at the learning centres. They also provided continuous training support and assistance to the teachers and the VECs and FECs to address the challenges which arose during the programme implementation process. As such, constant contact had been kept with the community through the regular meetings of VEC and FEC so that their participation ensured the smooth running and the success of the centres.

IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

A total of 5,600 learners have participated in the programme. The learners have acquired basic functional literacy and numeracy skills in Urdu and English and a variety of vocational skills. A majority of the graduates (86 per cent) are now able to read and write while 14 per cent require remedial assistance. Ultimately, with improved reading skills, most learners are now able to lead more independent lives as they do not have to, for example, ask for directions when travelling or ask for assistance to administer medication to their families. Similarly, but perhaps most importantly, most learners are now able to read the Qur'an or the Bible, which was often the primary motivation in joining the literacy programme. The programme has promoted intergenerational learning because the mothers and their children are now assisting each other to learn various literacy skills. This has, in turn, cultivated positive relationships between parents and their children. Many learners acquired vocational skills such as cutting and sewing skills and are positively contributing towards family subsistence. This has enhanced the status of women within their families and communities. In addition, the project has improved their confidence and thus enabled them to be proactive agents of social change and progress. Two hundred and forty-one community-based teachers have been trained and these will remain an invaluable community resource for a long time. Already, some teachers, in cooperation with VECs and FECs, are independently implementing developmental projects in their communities.

CHALLENGES

Some community leaders and influential families prevented the establishment of community learning centres in the villages. As a result, a number of meetings were arranged with community elders and the programme was further explained to them with regards to the benefits of literacy centres for community development. In most cases, centres were only established after community leaders and elders were convinced that they would be responsible for running and monitoring centre activities. Some of the challenges faced and their remedies were:

- Adolescent girls and young adult women are often not permitted to leave their homes unaccompanied by a male relative due to conservative traditions. As a remedy, literacy classes were organized in village centres close to participants' homes. Additionally, learning centres were established in homes of highly respected local teachers who guaranteed the moral security of the participants.

- Some parents were fearful that the literacy programmes would lead to the marginalization of their religious beliefs. To ameliorate these fears, BUNYAD developed a curriculum which integrates learning in Arabic (the language of the Qur'an) and Urdu, the language spoken by most participants. Equally important, BUNYAD developed easy-to-read learning materials which were distributed to parents to demonstrate to them that the programme was not undermining tradition and that, in fact, it was strengthening it. This gave some parents confidence in the programme, resulting in more learners enrolling. BUNYAD also shared with the parents the aim of learners to be able to read the Urdu translation of the Qur'an. This really excited the parents and the young women, who after reading the 30 chapters of the Qur'an in Urdu, were more comfortable to continue learning.

- Due to high rates of poverty, many potential learners could not afford to attend classes due to family responsibilities.

- Most learners were frustrated not to find employment after graduating from the project. As a result, programme emphasis is now on vocational skills training which will increase self-employment opportunities for learners.

SUSTAINABILITY

BLCC has established Community Citizens Boards (CCBs) and entrusted them to spearhead the initiation and implementation of programme activities within their communities as well as to undertake fundraising activities. With regards to the latter, BLCC has linked the CCBs to commercial banks such as the Khushali Bank and local governments, providing invaluable access to cheap loans. In addition, the establishment of the BUNYAD micro-credit enterprise has enabled BLCC to fund its activities from internal resources as well as to assist programme participants with short-term and cheap loans for income-generating activities. Finally, demand for functional literacy skills programmes among women is still high due to limited opportunities to access quality education.

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Books for Rural Areas of Viet Nam

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population
86,116,559 (2008 estimate)

Official languages
Vietnamese (other common languages: Thái, Tày, Mường, Khmer, Chăm, Chinese, Nùng, H'Mông, French and English)

**Access to primary education –
total net intake rate (NIR)**
94% (2006)

Total youth literacy rate (15–24 years)
94% (1995–2004)

Adult literacy rate (15 years and over, 1995–2005)
Total: 90%; Male: 94%; Female: 87%

Sources
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■ World Bank: World Development Indicators database, September 2008

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Books for Rural Areas of Viet Nam

Implementing organization
Centre for Knowledge Assistance and Community Development (CKACD)

Language of instruction
Vietnamese

Funding
The programme uses a crowdfunding strategy to attract cash and in-kind contributions from various members of society, including Vietnamese people (living in the country and overseas), parents, members of clans, Catholics, businesses and civil society groups.

Programme partners
Ministry of Education and Training; Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; local people's committees; departments of education and training; Association for Learning Promotion; student associations; parishes; publishing houses and businesses; parent association.

Annual programme costs USD 20,000 in 2015
Annual programme cost per learner
Costs vary across libraries depending on the number of books. On average, each library serves at least 50 readers, which renders the cost per reader low.

Date of inception 1997

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Viet Nam has made remarkable progress in education. Universal primary education was achieved in 2000 and universal secondary education has been achieved in some parts of the country. Educational institutions and centres have been established across the country in order to provide access to education, including

in hard-to-reach areas. At the same time, education quality and equity have also improved, especially among ethnic minorities, disadvantaged families, girls and marginalized population. In terms of literacy levels, the number of people able to read and write has increased significantly: in 2013 the overall literacy rate was 98.06 per cent for young people and 94.51 per cent for adults (UIS, 2013). The government has made education one of the priorities: since 2007, the education budget has accounted for around 20 per cent of total government expenditures (MOET, 2014).

These achievements created a foothold for the government to commit to building a lifelong learning society by 2020. One of the targets set out was to promote a reading culture for all citizens. To achieve this, various initiatives have been launched through media, libraries, museums, community learning centres and cultural centres (Hossain, 2016). For example, national Book Day (April 21) was launched in 2014 to promote reading habits and the importance of reading books to increase knowledge and skills (VNN, 2014). A network of more than 11,900 community learning centres (CLCs) has been established across the country to promote lifelong learning through reading and social activities (Hossain, 2016). In addition, Viet Nam has developed a library system of 17,022 libraries and public reading rooms nationwide, including 59 privately owned libraries (MOCST, 2016), in order to increase access to books and other reading material and to encourage reading habits.

However, even though libraries and reading rooms are free and open to public for long hours, use of this service apprears to be low (Dinh, 2011). The Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism (MOCST) reported that between 2011 and 2015, when there was a dramatic increase in the total number of books available in all libraries (an increase of more than 6 million), the number of people accessing libraries' services decreased by more than 1 million (MOCST, 2016). Moreover, according to a recent survey, besides textbooks, Vietnamese read on average less than one book a year (VNN, 2016). This concern is shared by educators: those in secondary schools report that their students have poor reading habits (Hossain, 2015). While there are many reasons for this slow improvement in the reading habits of the population, it is partly due to the limited possibilities for library staff to reach out to a broader population, due

especially to the failure to take advantage of information and communication technology (Hossain, 2016). As a consequence, this confines library services to those who proactively seek out these resources and reduces the chances of the poor and disadvantaged population to access books (Dinh, 2011).

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

Books for Rural Areas of Viet Nam began in 1997. In 2010, the Centre for Knowledge Assistance and Community Development (CKACD) was founded with the aim of expanding the initiative. It aimed to increase access to books and encourage reading habits by establishing a system of civil libraries where books can be accessed on a free-of-charge basis. These civil libraries are different from public libraries as they are funded by mobilizing community resources and are managed by community members or volunteers. The programme seeks, in particular, to increase book availability and accessibility for readers in rural and mountainous areas who have fewer opportunities to read books. As well as providing access, it also organizes group reading activities where readers can practise and strengthen their literacy skills.

Since its inception, the programme has operated in Viet Nam and developed in two phases: the first phase (10 years) was focused on methodology development while the second phase (nine years) has focused on implementation. The methodology development phase (1997–2007) was aimed at understanding the challenges involved in increasing accessibility to books for rural people and the disadvantaged as well as building knowledge of their reading interests. This phase also involved developing understanding of the operation of the existing government-led library system, as well as devising strategies for policy advocacy, from grassroots to ministerial levels, and for raising social awareness of the importance of reading books and the role of civil libraries. The implementation phase has applied lessons learned in the first phase in order to develop a system of civil libraries, aiming at improving their effectiveness in reaching out to people.

Since the first library of the programme was built in 2007, in Ha Tinh province in Viet Nam, the number of libraries has reached more than 9,000.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The programme envisages providing equal access to educational opportunities for all and developing a strong reading culture for Vietnamese people. In establishing more accessible civil libraries, it aims to:

- Increase the number of books available in rural and mountainous areas, addressing the historic shortage of reading material in these contexts.
- Overcome the shortcomings of traditional rigid approaches to literacy that have struggled to strengthen learners' literacy skills or equip them to flourish in a fast-changing society by promoting reading habits that encourage a lifelong and life-wide learning culture.
- Develop a spirit of sharing social responsibility and self-strengthening among Vietnamese people by encouraging direct contribution to building libraries.
- Foster reading habits everywhere, thus positively contributing to educational improvements in other countries by expanding the programme outside Viet Nam.

TEACHING AND LEARNING: APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

The programme targets readers of all ages. Thus far, it has provided access to reading material for readers aged from 2 and 75 years, particularly those living in rural and mountainous areas. To serve this purpose, five different library models have been developed to best serve different beneficiary groups:

- **Clan libraries.** In Viet Nam, particularly in northern and central provinces, 'clan' refers to a group of between 10 and 100 households that share the same ancestor, often living in the same village. They usually establish a common temple for worship and their own fund to encourage learning activities. Clan libraries are typically established using clan funds and are open to all clan members and villagers. The libraries are placed at the common temple and are open to all clan members and villagers.
- **Parish libraries** are hosted in churches, provide religious reading material, and are open to all, irrespective of their religious affiliation.
- **Parent-funded libraries.** These libraries are placed in classrooms and open to all students and their parents. They are funded by parents and/or school alumni and are managed by students with the help of school librarians. These libraries are reported to be more friendly in terms of giving access to books for students at schools.
- **Back-front military officer libraries** are based in the houses of military/police officers whose spouses are teachers. On the one hand, these libraries provide access to books for students and villagers. On the other, these families can motivate other families to open their own libraries.
- **Community libraries** are placed at the local centres for social protection and are open to everyone in the community, especially to people who are marginalized.

By providing differentiated services to diverse beneficiary groups, the programme improves the relevance of reading materials as well as accessibility to libraries. In addition, interactive reading activities are often organized to increase the frequency of interaction between readers and books and among readers. This kind of activities is traditionally absent in public and school libraries in Viet Nam. Readers are encouraged to spend 15–30 minutes per day at school and 30–60 minutes at home reading books. At school, students are also encouraged to attend group activities that strengthen reading comprehension, such as book presentation/discussion and book reading competition.

LIBRARY CONTENT

For each type of library, there is a recommended list of books relevant to its target group of readers. These lists are compiled from recommendations by teachers, students, books donors, and book companies partnered

with the programme. For example, clan libraries focus on books with content on healthcare, agriculture, law, civic education and literature. Parent-funded libraries pay more attention to class subjects such as social and natural sciences, history and English. The proposed lists can be modified to suit the needs of readers.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF FACILITATORS

The operation of these libraries has relied mostly on volunteers who are school principals, teachers, librarians, students and members of clans. They support the establishment and management of the libraries as well as the organization of reading activities and events.

Once a library is established, CKACD provides training for the members of the community who will be in charge of managing it. For libraries in schools, principals, teachers, librarians and students (usually class monitors) receive the training. The training in library management at local level is conducted in the form of on-site training or via phone call/email by volunteers who have been trained by CKACD. This training uses simple methods such as hands-on activities and collaborative teamwork. The training curriculum includes:

1. strategies on how to mobilize local contributions (both cash and in-kind) to building libraries;
2. techniques to manage libraries;
3. methods to organize reading promotion activities for students, villagers and disadvantaged groups.

In the coming years, the programme plans to create guidelines based on good practise among schools, which will be shared with all stakeholders.

ENROLMENT OF READERS

Interested readers can borrow books from any library that is accessible to them without having to register for a library card. Each library has a notebook to record lending and returning activities. Readers write down the names of the books they borrow together with a date and signature. The founder of the programme reports that this simplified procedure makes it more convenient for readers to visit libraries and increases the chances they will take out books.

At school, the same borrowing process is applied, i.e students' names are recorded to monitor their activities. This is done by core students with the help of the school librarian. To promote reading habits, each class will give recognition to students who have read the most weekly/monthly. Extra activities are organized to improve reading skills and understanding of the books.

Based on reading activities records, the programme tries to identify characteristics of readers at each location, e.g. what kind of books they read, how many books each reader reads per year. This information is used to improve the service of the libraries. The programme is also cooperating with schools to better evaluate the operation of the libraries as well as the needs of students.

CKACD is continuously developing new initiatives to reach out to new readers and promote reading. For example, one initiative is an event that promotes an intergerational approach to reading by encouraging parents and grandparents to read books with their children and grandchildren. Another initiative is a reading contest among clans.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The programme has been evaluated by CKACD every year. These evaluations have helped improve the libraries' offers in order to better serve the readers as well as to collect lessons learned and provide evidence for the replication of libraries and policy advocacy. Quantitative methods (e.g. using records from reading activities to calculate reading rates) and qualitative methods (e.g. interviewing readers) have been used to improve the effectiveness of the programme.

IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2007, the first clan library was built to serve more than 100 members of one clan and other villagers. Since then, the number of libraries has grown to 9,000, serving approximately 400,000 readers nationwide. The last three years in particular have witnessed a remarkable development of the programme. Geographically, these libraries are present in more than one-third of all provinces in Viet Nam, reaching students, families, clans, parishes and marginalized communities from diverse backgrounds, according to their specific needs.

In certain schools where the programme has been implemented, based on a self-evaluation report, there has been a significant increase in the number of books each person in the community reads per month/year (10 to 20 times higher than what was recorded in baseline data). Readers also have opportunities to practise reading skills with their children, members of their clans and peers. This helps them retain their skills by further practising them.

A figure recorded by the programme shows that more than 100,000 parents in rural areas have engaged in building libraries in classrooms, which represents a positive sign of shifting attitude among communities

towards ensuring their children have opportunities to read books. There have been instances when the readers took the initiative to contribute to creating awareness about books and establishing libraries to benefit their community.

The programme's future plan is to continue expanding its civil library system to more than 300,000 libraries offering reading opportunities to people in rural areas by 2020. Through social effect and experience gained from existing activities, it has also paved the way for the establishment of 200 STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) clubs in the upcoming years, which encourage reading about related STEM topics. At the same time, a national reading culture promotion policy is being drafted for consideration by the government.

TESTIMONIES

'I was diagnosed with osteogenesis imperfecta. I had always felt hopeless until the day I found and read the book Overcoming Destiny at the Hoang Clan Library. This book helped me realize the effort of people with disabilities to overcome challenges. Since then, instead of being worried and sad, I have tried to study better.'
Hoang Thi Nhan, student at An Duc secondary school

'Since the classroom libraries programme implemented in An Duc school, I have seen more students read books and borrow them to read at home. I feel sad for thousands of my former students in the past 30 years who lacked the same opportunity. For that reason, I will work with the Books for Rural Areas in Viet Nam programme unconditionally (without stipend)'
Ms. Duong Le Nga, former chairwoman of Youth Pioneers Union at An Duc secondary school.

CHALLENGES

- Despite some encouraging achievements, building and strengthening the reading habits of Vietnamese communities remains a challenge to the programme. The struggle is to initiate a change in social awareness about the role of libraries and books for the country's development.
- Parents and students report that their heavy homework load and homework schedules do not allow time for reading activities.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Personal involvement and commitment** from all stakeholders, especially the founder of the programme who has engaged in many awareness-raising initiatives, is critical to the implementation and growth of the programme.
- The programme's long-term vision requires **a strategic plan targeting both society and administration levels** through actions and policy advocacy.
- **Mass media** has been a helpful tool to increase social awareness and advocate for policy change at different levels.

SUSTAINABILITY

The programme's significant contributions to society have been recognized at national and local levels.

The programme has received attention from the media as well as support from numerous individuals, organizations and publishing houses. It has also received support from the MOET, MOCST and local government entities which support the implementation and expansion of the programme. For example, in 2009, MOCST decided to replicate the clan library model and, in 2015, MOET decided to replicate the parent-funded library model, both on a nationwide scale. These are particularly important legal frameworks for the programme to develop sustainably in the long term.

The crowd-funding strategy allows resources to be mobilized from grassroots level. It increases a sense of shared social responsibility as well as the programme's independence from foreign aid and government budgets. In some cases, members of clans or parishes donate books, which lowers the operation cost of these libraries. So far, these libraries have operated at a very low cost. In addition to a typical establishment cost of US $100–200, US $15 may be added to purchase more books annually. They are also highly effective. The high numbers of books read per reader have been recognized by MOET and MOCST. Pursuing this strategy, it is expected that the programme will expand to more provinces and serve 20 million Vietnamese readers in its long-term plan.

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Münster Prison Library

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population 82,726,000

Official language German

Total expenditure on education as % of GNP
4.81% (2011)

Adult literacy rate (15 years and over, 1995–2005)
Female: 99%; Male: 99%; Total: 99%

Sources
- UNESCO: EFA Global Monitoring Report
- UNICEF: Information by country
- World Bank: World Development Indicators database

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Münster Prison Library

Implementing organization
Münster Prison

Language of instruction
German

Funding
The federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia

Date of inception
2003

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The main purpose of a criminal sentence is to protect society from further crime by giving offenders a chance to learn from their mistakes, develop socially responsible behaviour and be able to live a crime-free life after their release from prison. Recognizing the value of the free time that most prisoners have in prison, many correctional institutions offer skills and vocational training as well as formal and non-formal education programmes as complementary parts of a sentence. Considering the fact that many inmates have never attended formal schooling, do not hold school-leaving certificates or have been low performers, the provision of such educational training and programmes in prison carries significant meaning. It is in this context that prison libraries take on central roles in creating the means and the setting in which lifelong learning can occur. Although the books and audio-visual resources give inmates a general opportunity in any case to direct their thoughts away from the prison environment, the main value of the prison library is in providing its users with the option of further education and self-reflection, obtaining life skills and improving their reading skills. Thus, a specific purpose of the prison library is to encourage inmates to use the library material creatively to read and to become lifelong learners. Many of the inmates start reading in prison. Moreover, it is believed that a person who comes to appreciate books during his or her time in prison has better chances of successful integration into the life after release from custody. As mandated by Article 28 of European Prison Law, 'every institution must provide an adequately stocked library accessible to all prisoners. It should offer a variety of books and other materials, suitable for both entertainment and education' (Art. 28.5). In Germany, each of the 16 federal

states administers its own prison system and supervises adult and juvenile offenders both in detention centres and in correctional facilities. Based on legislation, offenders have the right to access a library during their free time; however, no further details about the resources and organization of prison libraries are specified in the code. Lack of resources and budgetary limitations as well as the special circumstances of prisons and detention centres have always created obstacles for prison libraries to run as efficiently as they should. For instance, prisons in most German federal states do not employ professional librarians. Prison library management at regional level exists only in very few places, leaving the majority of prison staff running institutional libraries with no option but to act on their own. It is against this background that Münster prison in 2003 engaged a professional librarian, which led to fundamental reform and expansion of its library and system of administration. The library has since been able to stand out as an exemplary socially responsible library serving an often neglected group of people, namely incarcerated persons.

The Münster correctional facility, which is one of the oldest prisons in Germany, was built in 1853. Today, the prison houses almost 560 inmates from 50 countries. Most have the option of taking part in various programmes and activities including studies to earn a high school diploma. Approximately 310 inmates are employed for bookbinding, carpentry and locksmithing work as well as in jobs in the library, business office, kitchen and general housekeeping. The Münster Prison Library has undergone fundamental physical and conceptual change since 2003. Today, it offers nearly 10,000 books and other media in a completely renovated, colourful and attractive library room to a target group many members of which are not used to reading regularly. The Münster Prison Library was awarded the German Library Award of the year 2007 because of its impressive social library work.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the Münster Prison Library is to offer inmates an opportunity to use their free time constructively. The prison library serves three purposes:

- **Recreation** The prison library is one option within the institution's recreational programme. The books and audio-visual resources give inmates the opportunity to direct their thoughts away from prison and to 'move' beyond the prison bars, which constrain them physically. Turning reading into a pleasant leisure activity is a big step for the prisoners, many of whom have not had positive experiences in their previous encounters with books.
- **Education** Many of the inmates have limited levels of education. Some of them have never graduated from school or have been low school performers. A lot of them start reading in prison. Thus, a specific purpose of the prison library is to improve the inmates' literacy skills and to encourage them to use the library material in creative ways to read and to become lifelong learners. Moreover, the library materials are sources of information and education on a wide variety of subjects. Finally and importantly, the library provides educational materials, which are used in the curriculum of the Prison Education Department.
- **Personal development** The prison library also provides valuable resources for personal development, self-reflection and raising self-awareness. Reading gives the inmates some privacy and a certain degree of cultural freedom to think about their lives, find inspiration in what they read and reach a higher level of self-awareness.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION: APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

There are certain elements which distinguish the Münster Prison Library from others of its kind. Some of these innovative approaches and methods include:

SUCCESSFUL RENOVATION AND CREATIVE DESIGN

In 2005, a professional architect redesigned the library completely. The new library illustrates the belief that libraries can open doors to new worlds. The room, with its central location and attractive entrance, invites inmates into a large colorful space. The clever use of mirrors enlarges the room and gives it a kaleidoscopic effect. The library materials are displayed on three levels, on open shelves, moving carts and low cabinets. A 'railway station for literary travels' ('Bahnhof der Bücher') is set up to take inmates on a creative journey out of prison life.

A WIDE RANGE OF MATERIAL

The library collection consists of almost 10,000 books, audiobooks, CDs, DVDs, newspapers and magazines in 30 languages. Having more than 2,000 titles in foreign languages gives inmates who come from more than 50 countries the opportunity of reading in their own mother tongues. In addition to fiction and non-fiction, the library provides easy-to-read titles, illustrated books and comics, newspapers and magazines, audio books, CDs and DVDs. Graded reading material helps those with low reading skills. Legal publications inform and educate. Dictionaries and encyclopaedias open new doors to readers. Through government funds and book donations, the materials are regularly updated. Each year, 10–15 per cent of the collection is replaced with new titles.

OPEN STACK AND DIRECT ACCESS

One fundamental factor, which distinguishes the Münster Prison Library from other prison libraries, is the fact that inmates have direct access to the books and audio-visual collections. While most other prison libraries only provide materials to inmates from a printed catalogue selection, having access to open stacks has been the norm in Münster prison for more than 20 years, Each week, for 15 minutes, prisoners have the opportunity of choosing media directly from

the shelves. Moreover, prisoners have been given the option to access the library catalogue remotely through an intranet connection. Using the computers installed at different locations in all North Rhine-Westphalian correctional facilities, inmates can now conduct their own research. The possibility to walk around the bookshelves and browse books not only offers a change from the dreary cell atmosphere to the prisoners, but also creates more enthusiasm for reading.

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Through the efforts of the Prison Library Department since 2003 a vast multi-type cooperation network has been set up between the prison library and local organizations including bookstores, publishers, the university and especially Münster public library. For instance, through an inter-library loan system, inmates have access to the collection of Münster public library. The staff and trainees from both libraries have visited each other's libraries, and joint activities such as World Book Day, Copyright Day and Library Night have been organized. Working closely with other cultural organizations, the Münster Prison Library has been able to organize various cultural events to give inmates a taste of what is happening outside the prison walls. Some of these programmes include reading events and talks by authors and artists.

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

Although certain restrictions exist on prisoners' access to information technology, the library has been using computer applications developed in-house to manage the collection. In addition, inmates can use the stand-alone computers to conduct a search within the library catalogue.

COOPERATION WITH THE PRISON EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Prison Education Department offers inmates the opportunity to pursue two types of secondary school-leaving certificates – for Hauptschule and for Realschule (equivalent to lower secondary school diploma) as well as the Abitur (equivalent to the higher secondary school-leaving certificate). New levels of cooperation between the Prison Education Department and the library have been formed through the Library as a Partner in Education project introduced by the state of

Redesign of the library (2005)

North Rhine-Westphalia. The curriculum includes an introduction to the library and its resources and trains inmates in using the library materials effectively. In addition, based on their syllabus, the teachers can make purchase suggestions to the library.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Each year, the librarian and the warden agree on an annual library development plan with specific objectives. It is against this annual development plan that the library's performance is evaluated. Furthermore several research papers and scholarly publications have been written about the prison library within the past years.

IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

IMPACT

In addition to the annual evaluation, a survey was conducted in collaboration with the Documentation Centre for Prison Literature at Münster University in 2006 to assess inmates' reading habits. Out of 200 questionnaires returned (40 per cent of inmates participated), 79 per cent said they use their free time for reading which makes it the most popular leisure activity and leaves watching TV in second place. Sixty per cent of respondents said they spend an average of two hours a day reading, which, for the majority of them, is much more than they used to read before imprisonment. The majority of reading material (88 per cent) comes from the prison library with the rest being obtained from fellow inmates. More than 80 per cent of the respondents use the library monthly and almost half of them use it on a weekly basis. Reading for information and education has been the primary motive for 83 per cent of the inmates.

CHALLENGES

Probably the greatest challenge the prison library faces is to operate under restraints and special circumstances imposed by the environment of the prison. The Prison Library Department must comply with all the rules and regulations as well as security and order considerations of the prison administration. At the same time, competition for the available financial and human resources is rising continuously. Another major challenge is being able to deal with a certain level of imperfection. Because of the special context within which the prison library operates, inmate library assistants carry out almost all the routine tasks. This requires a level of compromise by the management of staff and high tolerance as most of the assistants do not have professional experience and are limited in the tasks they can perform.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Münster Prison Library is an excellent example of social library work and serves as a model for other prison libraries.

MANAGEMENT BY PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIANS

The Münster Prison Library's success demonstrates the important role professional librarians can play in reviving a library and creating an attractive literate environment that promotes a culture of reading. In the past, teachers, priests or social workers have been in charge of prison libraries; however, transferring prison library management to professional librarians has been the determining factor in the success of the Münster Prison Library.

CREATIVE USE OF LIBRARY SPACE

One of the lessons learned from the Münster Prison Library project has been the creative use of available space and turning it into an attractive and inspiring environment, in which users are invited to read and spend time. The library is colourful and it spreads out like a fan from the door. Bookshelves almost reach the ceiling and mirrors cover the rest of the space. The walls and ceiling are painted with leaves to create an uplifting atmosphere.

SUSTAINABILITY

The library budget is continuously granted by the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia. However, donations are also accepted to complement existing public funds.

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Last update: 16 February 2012

VoorleesExpress

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population 16.77 million (2012, World Bank)
Official language Dutch
**Total expenditure on education
as % of GDP** 6%
**Access to primary education –
total net intake rate (NIR)** 97%

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title VoorleesExpress
Implementing organization
SodaProducties foundation
Language of instruction Dutch
Funding
Government Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning
and the Environment: Ruimte voor Contact
programme, until August 2010; Ministry of Youth
and Family: Vrijwillige Inzet voor en door Jeugd en
Gezin (Voluntary Commitment by and for Youth
and Families) programme, until December 2011;
VSBfonds; OranjeFonds.
Programme partners
Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the
Environment; Ministry of Youth and Family;
housing corporation Mitros; Evident Interactive;
publisher Gottmer; Stichting Lezen (Reading
Foundation); Stichting Lezen and Schrijven
(Reading and Writing Foundation); Sectorinstituut
voor Openbare Bibliotheken (Sector Institute for
Public Libraries); CINOP; Oranje Fonds; Sardes;
Gottmer; Entoenentoen; Pica Educatief; Peuter
TV; Eenvoudig communiceren; Unieboek;
MultiCopy, national housing corporation Aedes;
national speech therapists oganization NVLF;
Landelijk Netwerk Thuislesorganisaties (home
learning organization); Stichting Actief
Ouderschap (Active Parents Foundation); and
numerous elementry schools.
Annual programme costs
National organization, Platform VoorleesExpress
€100,000. Local organizations: depending on the
number of participants, varying from around
€40,000 to €200,000.
Annual programme cost per learner:
Between €500 and €800
Date of inception 2006

COUNTRY CONTEXT

The education system in the Netherlands is one of the
most advanced in the world. The country invests 6 per
centof its GDP in education. It is the leading country on
UNICEF's children's well-being classification. Education
was one of the features evaluated on this list, and the
Netherlands got the highest score. However, the read-
ing abilities of many primary school children fall short
of the required level. One in seven pupils has an inad-
equate reading level when they finish Year 3 of primary
education. On finishing Year 4, the reading levels of one
in three pupils are inadequate, while a quarter of pupils
finish Year 8 at the reading level of a Year 6 pupil.

Many young students who do not acquire the required
level of literacy nevertheless continue with their stud-
ies. Among adults, 35 per cent of illiterate people
graduated from primary education, while 26 per cent
have a secondary school diploma. Almost a third (30
per cent) have a vocational degree and the rest (9 per
cent) have a pre-university education qualification or
higher.

The risk of illiteracy is higher among women, low-
skilled workers, older adults, first-generation immi-
grants and people who are unemployed. Reading
problems are therefore disproportionately found
among children from socio-economically and/or edu-
cationally disadvantaged families. Socio-economic
status is a strong predictor of children's school per-
formance. What children learn about written lan-
guage depends on how it is used in daily routines and
rituals and the interactions that take place around
those activities. It was in response to this problem
that the SodaProducties organization initiated the
VoorleesExpress programme.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

The VoorleesExpress (ReadingExpress) programme
started as an initiative of two sisters in the Kanaleneiland
district of Utrecht, an area with many immigrants,
low social cohesion and high crime rates. The sis-
ters wanted to change this, and started the founda-
tion SodaProducties in December 2005. Their first

programme, VoorleesExpress started in January 2006. SodaProducties develops projects that facilitate the exchange of knowledge between organizations in the field of volunteering and social entrepreneurship. One of the concerns of the foundation was with the language and literacy skills of Dutch children. In order to improve them, they created the VoorleesExpress programme. VoorleesExpress was initiated with 10 volunteers and 10 families from Kanaleneiland. The programme succeeded, and, from 2007, it was extended to other Dutch cities.

Today, VoorleesExpress targets both immigrant and native families with low literacy levels. Franchises of VoorleesExpress were established in 59 locations in total. By the beginning of 2014 the programme had reached 3,314 families and had about 3,791 volunteers.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- Enhance children's reading habits.
- Stimulate children to enjoy books.
- Enrich the home literacy environment by involving all family members.
- Promote children's language and pre-literacy skills.
- Enable parents to encourage their children's language acquisition in their own way.
- Strengthen the relationship between parents and schools so they share responsibility for the child's development, supporting and augmenting each other's efforts.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION: APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

The VoorleesExpress stimulates language and pre-literacy skills development and the joy in reading of children from families with low literacy by reading books to them. The programme enhances children's language development at an early age and encourages parents to take an active role in their children's early development.

READING TO CHILDREN IN THE HOME

For a period of 20 weeks, a reader pays weekly visits to the family. The reader stays for an hour, familiarizing the children and their parents with the nightly ritual of reading to the kids. The reader gives the parents the tools they need to take over the reading in due course and tells the parents about other ways to encourage their children's language acquisition.

USE OF VOLUNTARY WORKERS

VoorleesExpress is driven by a group of voluntary workers who are all carefully selected, trained and supported by a paid worker employed by a quality organization such as a public library or a social welfare association.

STRONG LOCAL NETWORKS

The programme aims for a network-based approach. VoorleesExpress works with partners in the fields of reading promotion, parental involvement and volunteer work and participates in several nationwide and local projects and programmes, such as BoekStart (BookStart), Taal voor het Leven (Language for Life) and Bibliotheek op School (Library at School). This helps offer families a number of ways to encourage reading and improve language development. Cooperation also enables us to refer people to other guidance organizations if need be.

DIALOGIC READING

The readers of VoorleesExpress use the so-called dialogic reading style'. They implement this method by talking about what happens in a book with the children, encouraging them to predict what will happen next and matching the story to the child's interests, personal experiences and knowledge. The volunteers like reading, especially to children, and their objective is to transmit their passion for reading to the children and their families.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PARENTS

Parents have a central role in the process of helping children enjoy reading. Often, they have their own difficulties with reading and lack the self-confidence to inspire the children to read. The programme aims to provide them with tools and tricks to help their children. Parents have to be present during the reading sessions, and have to define what they want to accomplish and reflect on the difficulties they encounter. At the end, each family decides the approach they are going to take in the future.

VoorleesExpress also acknowledges the importance of strengthening the contact between parents and schools. Greater involvement of the parents has a positive influence on children's in-school development. This gives children a head start in their education, an effect that lasts throughout their time in primary school.

Therefore, families are encouraged to give voice to their questions and to actively engage in their children's further development.

MATERIAL

The books used in the reading sessions are borrowed from local libraries. The parents receive a free library card, through which they have access to the books. In addition to the library card, the other most relevant resource is the 'reading diary'. This book is a personal reading journal for each child. It rotates between the family, the volunteer reader and the teacher, so all of them add something to it.

The reading diary shows the number of reading sessions, the day and time of the session, and the contact details of the reader and the coordinator. After every visit the child ticks a reading session, making it clear when the reader has visited and when the project ends. The diary helps make reading a ritual.

The readers note the books that have been read to the children, which methods worked better and any other relevant considerations. It is useful also as a means of communicating information to the parents and the coordinator.

Additionally, it contains information about dialogic reading, books, linguistic games and libraries for the parents. It also gives suggestions for enhancing the language and pre-literacy development of their children.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT) USAGE

VoorleesExpress has a partnership with BereSlim, a provider of pedagogical computer games for young children aged between 3 and 7 years and their parents and educators. Children can play educational games and see picture books. The products of BereSlim can be used at home, by schools, kindergartens and libraries. While it is very important to encourage children to use real books, digital/animated picture books can be a good support in promoting reading and language development. These picture book stories have been digitised and brought to life with moving images, voices, sound and music. Children comprehend the story significantly better and learn new words and sentence structures as a result. The VoorleesExpress

also makes use of ICTs for public relations purposes. The programme website (www.voorleesexpress.nl) is a source of information on the programme to which volunteers and families can add. In addition, there is an online community for the volunteers to share their experiences, ask questions and get information. There are also Facebook and Twitter accounts for the programme, while project managers can access the VoorleesExpress intranet to order material, purchase documents and be in contact with each other. The programme is also working to develop a mobile phone application that will give parents the possibility of sharing their experiences from home.

SELECTION AND TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS

The volunteer readers are selected, trained and supported by a paid worker employed by an organization such as a public library or a social welfare association. The volunteers come from vocational schools, universities and volunteer centres. The local VoorleesExpress offers training aimed at equipping volunteers with an understanding of how they can approach parents and make them more actively engaged in the development of the children.

IDENTIFICATION AND RECRUITMENT OF FAMILIES

A family is eligible for the programme if their children are aged between 2 and 8 years and have insufficient Dutch language proficiency, are at risk of developing a language delay, or dislike books and reading. Cases in which parents have difficulty reading to their children because they have low literacy skills, or because they do not know how to do it, also receive the assistance of VoorleesExpress.

The parents have to be willing to learn to read, be at home when the reader comes, help their children and, eventually, take over the reading themselves.

The children's teacher, or a VoorleesExpress employee, decide – via an intake conversation with the parent – whether the project is suitable for the family, and they determine the specific needs of the family. Sometimes the children's grades are considered or the children are asked to read a little to inform a judgment about vocabulary knowledge, comprehension level or the interest

they show in reading. The parents are also observed to see if they are engaged in learning which books are suitable for their children and in thinking about how can they use dialogic reading to make books more fun. Nursery schools, primary schools, speech therapists, Centra voor Jeugd en Gezin (Centres for Children and Family) and infant welfare centres all collaborate on the recruitment of target families.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

VoorleesExpress started in Utrecht but expanded to other locations using a franchise-based system. In each district of the country, one self-contained organization, for instance a welfare or volunteer organization or a public library, delivers the VoorleesExpress programme. SodaProducties supports the franchisees through training events and materials and the exchange of knowledge and tips. The organization also enlists the help of nationwide networks.

At a local level, there are three fundamental roles: the project managers, the coordinators and the readers. The last two are volunteer positions. The project managers administer the VoorleesExpress franchise locally and can employ interns or project staff. Many project managers take care of several locations. The coordinators support five readers and their reading families and act as links between readers and project managers.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

VoorleesExpress monitors the implementation of the programme by conducting surveys of readers and coordinators on the activities of VoorleesExpress. University students regularly conduct surveys about the programme. In addition, VoorleesExpress collaborates with knowledge centres that specialise in literacy and parental involvement, such as Sardes, Stichting Lezen and Schrijven (Reading and Writing Foundation), Stichting Actief Ouderschap (Active Parents Foundation), Stichting Lezen (Reading Foundation), SIOB (Netherlands Institute for Public Libraries), CINOP and CPNB (Collective Promotion for the Dutch Book).

IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENTS
The effectiveness of the VoorleesExpress programme has been assessed by an independent committee of experts. In 2012 the project was included in the Databank Effectieve Jeugdinterventies (Effective Youth Interventions) of the Nederlands Jeugdinstituut (Dutch Youth Institute) (NJI) as an approved intervention programme. NJI said of VoorleesExpress that:

Children who participated in the VoorleesExpress programme later showed better language skills, understanding of the story, reading comprehension and vocabulary. They also enjoyed reading more. In the family home, the children have a richer language experience. Their parents enjoy reading to them more and appreciate the importance of it; visits to the library increase and there are more books around the home for the children to read; children look at books longer and more often.

VoorleesExpress has received the recognition of many organizations that emphasize its contribution to society. Among the awards received are the Meer dan handen vrijwilligersprijs 2012 (Over Hands Volunteers Prize), the Nationale Alfabetiseringsprijs 2010 (National Literacy Prize), the Achmea Publieksprijs 2010 (Achmea Public Price) and the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and Europees Platform Prize 2010.

TESTIMONIALS
'I was read to a lot as a child and now I'm a proper book lover. Reading and being read to broadens your horizons and teaches you so much. I wanted to share that feeling with my reading family!'
Volunteer reader, Mirjam

'Before enroling in the project, Ryan showed no interest in books at all. Last week at playtime he suddenly marched over to the bookcase, grabbed a book, sat himself down and started to read!'
Teacher

CHALLENGES

Many of the participating families experience difficulty with the Dutch language. The children have insufficient language proficiency to develop proper literacy skills and to perform well in an educational environment.

However, many native children also have difficulties as they grow up in a poor home literacy environment. It is not easy to reach out to them, as there is a lot of shame associated with low literacy skills among native families.

VoorleesExpress is often confronted with families facing multiple problems. Many of them ask for additional support, before, during and after participating in the project. They want additional help to enhance the language skills of their children or have other requests for help (such as learning how to ride a bike, homework counselling, Dutch language courses for father/mother).

LESSONS LEARNED

VoorleesExpress supported an increase in shared roles between parents and schools. For years, the school's responsibility and that of the parents were kept separate. Increasingly, now, parents and schools are seen as having an equal responsibility. Greater involvement of the parents has a positive influence on children's in-school development. Parental involvement at home proves especially effective in giving children a head start in their education and has a continuing impact throughout their time in primary school. Aware of this phenomenon, VoorleesExpress has worked to increase collaboration between schools and families. It aims to become an expert in how to involve parents more actively in their children's education. In order to succeed a project needs external support. VoorleesExpress created a network of donors and collaborators that made it possible to expand to different cities in the country and reach many families. A good public relations strategy is fundamental to get the attention and the support of governments and organizations.

SUSTAINABILITY

The continuity and growth of VoorleesExpress depends on it being embedded in local and national structures. It has to have strong collaboration with local and national organizations. VoorleesExpress also invests intensively in public relations by appearing at conferences and in the media, and by collecting donations to get financial support.

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- Netherlands Youth Institute
- Dutch Qualification Network

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Tell Me a Story

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population
8,119,000 (2013)
National languages
German, French, Italian and Romansch

Sources
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Schenk mir eine Geschichte (Tell me a story). The programme is also known under its French name, *1001 histoires dans les langues du monde.*
Implementing organization
Schweizerisches Institut für Kinder und Jugendmedien (SIKJM) (Swiss Institute for Children's and Youth Media)
Language of instruction
German, Albanian, Arabian, Chinese, English, French, Farsi, Italian, Kurdish, Croatian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Tamil, Tibetan, Tigrinya, Turkish and Urdu.
Funding
Public funding, local partners and private foundations, namely the Mercator Foundation, Arcas Foundation, Avina Foundation, Sophie and Karl Binding Foundation, Ria and Arthur Dietschweiler Foundation, Gamil Foundation, Hamasil Foundation, Landis and Gyr Foundation, Ernst Göhner Foundation and Thoolen Foundation.
Programme partners
Numerous local partners (city/district government, community centres, libraries, social organizations, etc.) throughout Switzerland.
Annual programme costs
CHF 120,000 (USD 124,000) for national coordination, further education and implementing new locations (not included are local running costs)

Date of inception
2006

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Migrants in Switzerland face multiple disadvantages in the Swiss education system. Children with a migration background are less likely to have access to pre-school education, are more likely to attend lower-tier secondary schools and are underrepresented among college graduates. For example, around a quarter of people with a second-generation migrant background do not continue their education beyond the mandatory minimum nine years compared to 16 per cent of the population without a migration background. Furthermore, the rate of secondary and tertiary education completion is lower among people with a second-generation migrant background than it is among the non-migrant population. While individuals with a migrant background have secondary and tertiary completion rates of 50 and 25 per cent, respectively, people without migrant backgrounds complete secondary and tertiary school at rates of 53 and 30 per cent, respectively (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2014). The main reasons for the disadvantage faced by children with migrant backgrounds are language barriers, the smaller financial means of their parents, and the relative lower involvement of parents from these groups in their children's education (20 Minuten, 2011; Becker, 2010).

The family literacy programme, Schenk mir eine Geschichte (in English, Tell me a story), seeks to overcome language barriers and increase parental involvement by reaching out to families with migrant backgrounds in an effort to improve the language and literacy development of children in their native language. The premise of the work is that knowing their native language greatly supports children in learning the language of the home country. In this way, Schenk mir eine Geschichte plays an important role in addressing the educational needs of underserved populations in Switzerland.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

Schenk mir eine Geschichte provides storytelling courses to families with migrant backgrounds in order to promote the language and literacy development of

children between the ages of 2 and 5. In addition, the programme aims to involve parents in supporting their children's educational attainment.

After its initial implementation, in Zurich and Basel in 2006, Schenk mir eine Geschichte gradually expanded to other cities and communities. Local partners of the Swiss Institute for Children's and Youth Media (SIKJM), including libraries, community centres and city and district government, organize and finance the programme in their localities, while SIKJM supervises the programme and supports local partners by creating teaching materials and providing introductory and continuing training for facilitators. In 2014, the programme was offered in 14 *kantonen* (states) throughout Switzerland, including Basel, Bern, Lausanne and Zurich. Around 1,500 families participated in 1,663 classes, conducted in seventeen languages and facilitated by 130 teachers. Each class has 10 participants on average. Since 2006, a total of 8,670 classes have taken place, involving approximately 87,000 participants.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
The programme aims to:
- Promote the literacy development of children aged 2 to 5 with migrant backgrounds in their native language.

- Induce parents to support literacy attainment and the language foundation of their children at an early age by introducing reading and writing activities into their daily lives.
- Demonstrate to parents that incorporating literacy activities at home plays an important role in their children's literacy attainment.
- Indicate to parents that their children should be literate in their native language because this is an important foundation for learning the Official language(s).
- Introduce parents to available resources in their community, such as language classes for adults and children, libraries and pre-school classes.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

LEARNERS' ENROLMENT AND ESTABLISHING LEARNING NEEDS
Schenk mir eine Geschichte targets families with a migrant background, who usually do not attend comparable educational courses for parents. Programme facilitators emphasize low-threshold access to the programme, which means that all interested families are able to attend classes at any time, even if a particular course has already started. The programme is free and families do not need to register prior to attending.

Usually, between 8 and 12 families participate in each course, including mothers, fathers, grandmothers and aunts. In most cases, children are accompanied by one parent or family member.

The facilitators play a central role in enroling families onto the programme, both in person, through frequent outreach activities, and over the phone. Other methods used to engage families include word-of-mouth promotion, outreach to friends and relatives, promotion in kindergartens and schools, language classes and family services. Programme implementers also use social media tools such as WhatsApp and Facebook to spread information about the next storytelling event. Enroling new participants ultimately requires gaining the trust of parents and overcoming cultural challenges. These cultural challenges include the shame some parents feel about their own schooling level, the restriction on some groups of women accessing public spaces, and negative experiences of Swiss government institutions.

TEACHING AND LEARNING: APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

The programme mostly offers storytelling sessions for groups of families with the same language background, who receive classes in their native language. More heterogeneous groups can attend classes offered in German, which also incorporate native languages in games and social activities. Parents and children attend classes together.

The facilitators conduct classes in a holistic, multi-faceted way that actively involves children and parents in the learning process. Furthermore, facilitators structure their teaching around reoccurring formats, which separate language and reading exercises from games and other social activities. Typically, language and reading activities take place in a classroom-type setting, where facilitators issue instructions and ask questions. Parents play a supporting role by helping their children remain focused during the class. Other activities, such as games, crafts and group activities, take place in a family-type setting, with parents taking a much more prominent role in working with their children.

The central component of Schenk mir eine Geschichte is storytelling, which facilitators approach in different ways. Some teachers prefer to tell stories in their own words, supplementing their storytelling with acting and gestures. Other teachers prefer to read the stories from children's books and discuss the stories with the children afterwards. Both approaches are suitable for the purposes of the programme since each emphasizes storytelling methods and the importance of dialogue.

TEACHING CONTENT

During classes, facilitators tell and read stories and encourage parents to participate in games and activities such as singing, crafts, role-playing and individual reading. Families are also encouraged to write, draw or tell their own stories. Another major component of the programme is to introduce parents to the literacy resources available to them. The focus here is on familiarizing parents with libraries in order to facilitate easier access to books in both their native language and German.

Facilitators also educate parents as to how they can support their children's literacy and language development within the family. Specifically, parents learn how to support a bilingual education and receive advice and information on other educational issues, as well as access to resources such as parent meetings, language classes and social groups. For this purpose, SIKJM creates and distributes information in the native language of participants. In general, facilitators have the freedom to customize course content according to the background of participants.

In 2014, the programme was offered in numerous languages, including German, Albanian, Arabian, English, French, Farsi, Italian, Kurdish, Croatian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Tamil, Tibetan, Tigrinya, Turkish and Urdu. The programme is open to the addition of new languages, should demand arise. One course usually consists of between 8 and 12 90-minute classes, which take place weekly or bi-weekly in community centres, libraries or schools. 8 to 12 families usually participate in each course. Most families attend the groups on a regular basis.

FACILITATORS

Volunteers who know the language and are familiar with the cultural background of the families attending the courses carry out the programme. SIKJM provides these intermediaries with a basic understanding of language and literacy development, methods of storytelling, bilingual education, parent education, and media usage. SIKJM offers both introductory and continuing education to facilitators and observes their activities during classes, offering support and advice to improve where necessary. Facilitators are required to attend training sessions. However, pedagogical education is not a prerequisite to becoming a facilitator. As such, most facilitators are 'semi-professionals'.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The programme has undergone two major external evaluations. The first evaluation was conducted in 2008 by the teacher training college in Zurich. The second took place in 2014 and was conducted by the Marie Meierhofer Institut für das Kind (please find links to both documents in *Sources*). Internally, SIKJM has analysed all its courses in terms of: the number of attendees, the attendance frequency of families, the level of involvement of parents, and the information parents receive about family learning and community resources.

IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The programme allows children to improve their language and literacy skills since they receive help from their parents and teacher and are able to interact with other children. Specifically, children acquire new words and improve their understanding of text. In addition, children become more interested in stories and books, which contributes to the sustainable impact of the programme. Testimonies of parents point out that their children learn something new every time they attend classes and enjoy listing to the stories. They also value other class activities, such as artwork and drawing, and the children are proud to have created something with their parents.

The programme also promotes intergenerational family learning as it teaches parents how to support their children in their educational development by implementing learning activities at home. Both parents and children gain self-confidence from participating in the programme because they feel that their language and culture is publicly acknowledged and they meet people with similar backgrounds. The programme is, therefore, also a source of motivation for parents to support their children's literacy development. For example, one mother explains that she and her husband started to take out children's books from a library to read to their daughter, something they did not do previous to attending the programme.

Moreover, the programme has a positive effect on the education of parents as many become interested in reading and visiting libraries on their own time. Parents also appreciate the strong social component of the programme as they meet new people with similar backgrounds and interests while attending classes.

CHALLENGES

- The teaching methodology used in the programme could benefit from a more structured, goals-oriented approach. The facilitators design classes and activities after their own preferences and put less emphasis on general goals as they are often unaware of how much the teaching approach matters (the method of storytelling is an example). The programme could be improved through a structured and coherent approach that defines each teaching format, such as storytelling and games, in more detail.

- Incorporating parents into the learning process is a central challenge of the programme. For example, some facilitators find it challenging to engage with parents in front of their children, when they see that parents need help with their children (e.g. a mother struggling to control her child). Another problem is that, sometimes, one parent does not want the family to attend classes, which can cause families to stop participating. Some facilitators also struggle to work with older and uninterested children.

- Access to books and other media in native languages is another challenge, especially when courses do not take place in international libraries.

- The enrolment of participants largely depends on the ability of individual facilitators to reach out to and engage families with migrant backgrounds.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The way a story is told matters for the literacy development of children. Facilitators who tell stories in their own words, with gestures and acting, allow children to recreate the stories with their own imaginations, which improves their verbal understanding of texts and promotes their ability to add additional information. Reading stories aloud improves understanding of texts but has the added benefit of introducing children to written language. Furthermore, discussing the stories with children afterwards shows children how written language translates into spoken language and allows them to evaluate their own understanding of the story.

- The incorporation of parents into the learning process is crucial for the success and sustainability of the programme. Achieving this challenging goal requires a well-defined concept with a clear approach to teaching, as well as ongoing coaching and support for facilitators.

- The location of classes affects the outcome. Generally, classes should take place in separate rooms and not in public settings such as the public space of a library. In public settings, children are easily distracted and parent feel less confident in participating in the learning process.

- Establishing trust between facilitators and parents is crucial to the success of the programme. Gaining the trust of parents is not only necessary in changing family literacy practise and motivating parents to support their children's literacy development but it is also the most effective way to enrol new families into the programme. In fact, successfully enroling families from specific migration backgrounds (e.g. Albanian families) depends on the key role of facilitators who are well-integrated into the community. Those facilitators who come from the same community and are in close contact with the families are often those best able to incorporate parents into the learning process during classes.

- The implementation of the programme requires time. Specifically, parents require time to become comfortable in their participation in the programme, especially if classes take place in public spaces. In addition, establishing trusting relationships and changing learning dynamics within families is a long-term process.

- Having groups with families from the same cultural background is highly conducive to family learning, as parents are often more reluctant to engage in learning activities with their children in different settings.

SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the programme depends on the willingness of local partners to organize and finance classes. However, public authorities grow more and more reluctant to finance the programme, which is leading to scarcer financial resources.

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Bookstart

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population
64,097,085 (2013, World Bank)
Official language
English
Total expenditure on education as % of GNP
5.5% (2010)
Total youth literacy rate (15–24 years)
Total: 100%; Male: 100%; Female: 100%
**Primary school net enrolment/attendance
100%** (2005–2010)
Adult literacy rate (15 years and over, 2005–2010)
Total: 99%; Male: 99%; Female: 99%

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Bookstart
Implementing organization
Booktrust UK
Language of instruction English
Funding
The Government of the United Kingdom of Great
Britain and Northern Ireland, local authorities and
sponsorship from various private stakeholders
such as book publishers and book-sellers
Date of inception
1992

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

As a result of the systematic institutionalization of an environment conducive to sustainable education development in the country over many decades (e.g. through increased public spending on education, extensive teacher training and retention programmes), the United Kingdom now has one of the most developed and advanced educational systems in the world. The government is currently investing

about 5,5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the education sector and is thus able to fulfil one of its primary statutory obligations of providing free and compulsory education to all children aged between 5 and 16 years. Consequently, the UK's education system has been expanding rapidly at all levels over the years as manifested by the high net enrolment or attendance rates at pre-primary (81 per cent), primary (100 per cent) and secondary (100 per cent) school levels as well as the near universal youth and Adult literacy rates (see above).

However, while government support for educational development in the UK has generally been increasing in recent years, support for pre-primary or early childhood education (ECE) continues to lag behind other sectors. Indeed, it has been observed that while the country has achieved universal enrolment rates at primary and secondary school levels, only about 81 per cent of children aged 5 years and below are currently enrolled in pre-primary schools (compared to 100 per cent in European countries such as the Netherlands, France and Germany). There are numerous challenges which impede the provision and expansion of ECE in the UK. These include: reductions in state childcare support and the fact that 'pre-primary school places are only free for four-year olds [while] funding for three-year olds is at the discretion of local education authorities (LEAs), which are the responsible bodies for

providing state education to pupils in their areas.' These challenges have, in turn, created national inequalities with regards to access to ECE, with children living in poor municipalities and from poor and disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (such as migrant families) having limited access to quality pre-school education. Hence, in an effort to address these fundamental challenges and create quality ECE opportunities for all children as well as to empower parents and caregivers to be proactive and effective educators, Booktrust UK – an independent educational NGO which was founded in 1921 – initiated Bookstart in 1992.

THE BOOKSTART EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

Bookstart is an integrated home-based ECE and early childhood development (ECD) programme which is currently being implemented across the UK. The programme targets both pre-school children and their parents and/or caregivers and therefore primarily strives to enhance access to pre-school education for all children in the UK and to nurture a culture of home-based learning by encouraging parents and/or caregivers to share (read) books, stories and rhymes with their children from as early an age as possible.

The institutionalization of Bookstart was premised on the long-established fact that parents, as children's primary caregivers and educators, play a critical role in shaping children's psychosocial (cognitive, emotional, personality, language, etc.) development and thus their overall lives, as well as on scientific (mostly psychological) evidence which show that access to quality ECE positively impacts children's cognitive development which, in turn, enhances their potential for successful long-term learning. In light of this and as detailed below, Booktrust provides participating families with a variety of age-specific thematic learning resources, including books and interactive games, which seek to enhance children's psychosocial and literacy skills development by capturing their imaginative curiosity about the world around them.

PROGRAMME AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

As an integrated and intergenerational education programme, Bookstart has numerous goals. Most importantly, however, the programme endeavours to:

- create sustainable home-based ECE opportunities for all children in the UK, particularly for those living in socio-economically disadvantaged communities (i.e. promote universal access to ECE);
- promote appropriate and quality ECD practises in the country;
- nurture in every child a lifelong love of books and reading;
- nurture children's psychosocial and literacy skills development from an early age;
- cultivate a culture of home or family-based (intergenerational) learning;
- empower parents and caregivers to be effective educators;
- promote social inclusion and empowerment of all persons through access to education.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION: APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

FUNDING

Bookstart is currently being implemented with assistance and sponsorship from the government (including local authorities) and private sector (e.g. book publishers, libraries and book-sellers). Through this innovative public and private partnership, Booktrust is able to use relatively small amounts of public money as a catalyst for releasing a much larger contribution from the private sector. For example, for every £1 invested by the Department for Education, Booktrust generates an additional £4 in support from its private-sector partners. In addition to financial support, Booktrust also receives significant material contributions, such as free book gifts, from its private partners.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The implementation of Bookstart is heavily dependant on parents and/or caregivers who act as the principal facilitators and educators. However, given that most parents and caregivers are not trained ECE and ECD practitioners, while some may be semi-literate or even functionally illiterate, Booktrust works closely with local library staff, health visiting teams and local ECE and ECD practitioners to support parents and caregivers in executing their duties. Such technical support has been invaluable in ensuring the effective and efficient implementation of the programme since its inception in 1992.

MOBILIZATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Booktrust employs several strategies and mechanisms to mobilize families to participate in Bookstart and, in particular, to encourage parents and caregivers to proactively participate in their children's formative learning process and development. Notably, Booktrust routinely places informative advertisements in the public media (i.e. community and national newspapers, magazines, and television and radio stations) and holds regular community-based advocacy campaigns (e.g. through its rhyme week programme) encouraging parents and caregivers not only to engage with the programme but also to read books regularly with their children. Pamphlets and educational blogs on its website and on popular social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook are also regularly produced for the same purpose. In addition, these platforms are also used to inform and update the public, programme participants, potential participants and other stakeholders about Booktrust's programme activities within their communities. Booktrust also hosts downloadable resources on its website, including, for example, book reviews and interactive games, which are available for free use by learners and readers of all ages and abilities. Such a strategy plays a critical role not only in promoting intergenerational learning by making learning resources easily available to all but also in motivating families to join and continue to participate in Bookstart.

PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS

In order to ensure the successful and sustainable implementation of Bookstart, Booktrust provides participating families with free book packs for use by children of different age groups and abilities as well as ECE teaching-guidance modules for use by parents and/or caregivers who act as the programme's primary facilitators or educators. Children's reading or learning packages are carefully selected by a panel of ECE and ECD experts and often cover a wide spectrum of themes including fiction, rhymes and illustrated short stories. Although these book packages are mostly procured at a low cost or as gifts from Booktrust's long-standing private partners, such as public libraries, book-sellers and book publishing houses, Booktrust is solely responsible for selecting books and other learning resources without undue influence from the government or publishers. This ensures that the programme is not usurped for commercial or political purposes.

Furthermore, in order to ensure that the programme remains relevant to all, the teaching/learning resources are often selected to reflect and satisfy the differing needs of individual communities and their families. In general, however, a Bookstart teaching/learning package includes one or more of the following items:

- Dual language books and guidance to encourage every family to share books.
- Specialized packs for children who are blind/partially sighted or deaf/hearing impaired.
- Resources and support for teenage pregnancy practitioners and projects including the Family Nurse Partnership.
- Resources for charities and voluntary organizations which engage with families and children from a range of backgrounds, including: HomeStart, Prisoners Advice and Care Trust, Action for Prisoners, Families and KidsVIP.
- Resources for children's centres and early years settings to help practitioners promote speech and language development.
- Opportunities for targeted work with Gypsy, Roma Travellers.
- Resources for children's hospital schools and children's hospices.
- Resources to promote library joining and regular access to many more books for free.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In addition to internal programme impact assessment reviews, which are undertaken by Booktrust on an ongoing basis (e.g. the Booktrust National Impact Evaluation, 2009), Booktrust has also commissioned several external evaluation studies, such as *Bookstart: The First Five Years* (Moore and Wade, 1993, 1998 and 2000); and the Family Reading Activity Survey (2010) by the Fatherhood Institute and ICM Research to delineate the impact of the programme in the UK. Notably, most recently, Booktrust commissioned Just Economics LLP to conduct a forecasted Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis in order to quantify the social, environmental and economic value created by Bookstart in England for the 2009/10 financial year. As detailed below, these stud-

ies reveal that Bookstart has had a positive impact not only children and their families but also on wider society.

IMPACT

Bookstart has had a significant impact on the development and expansion of ECE in the UK since its inception in 1992. Most significantly, the programme reaches more than 2 million children every year and has been the main conduit through which Booktrust procures and distributes about 2,155,000 book packs annually to families across the country (i.e. 2,010,000 in England, 70,000 in Wales and 75,000 in Northern Ireland). Qualitatively, several evaluation reports have highlighted the following key programme impacts:

- Like other related ECE or early learning intervention programmes, impact assessment and evaluation studies have revealed that by exposing children to books and a culture of home-based learning at an early age, Bookstart critically helps to nurture children's formative psychosocial, language and literacy skills development as well as a sustained love of books, all of which provides a critical foundation for successful long-term learning. Indeed, interviews with some primary school teachers in the UK have revealed that children who participated in Bookstart demonstrate greater learning aptitude and language and literacy skills competencies than their peers who were not extensively exposed to books at an early age. According to Wade and Moore (2000), for example, mean scores for a range of literacy and numeracy tests among primary school children indicate that Bookstart children outperform their non-Bookstart counterparts by between 1 per cent and 5 per cent. Essentially, therefore, by positively influencing children's formative psychosocial development, Bookstart enhances children's learning capacities.
- The programme also fosters the development of important social skills among children as well as strong emotional bonds between parents and their children, primarily by increasing quality time that children and their parents/carers spend and work together. This not only enhances familial cohesion and thus reduces the likelihood of deviant behaviour among children but also provides children with an essential foundation for engaging with the wider community.

- The recent cost-benefit and Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis revealed that Bookstart is a low-cost (cost-effective) early learning intervention which creates significant social value for parents, children and the state. In particular, the programme helps to save the nation millions of tax-dollars per year (e.g. through a reduction in the provision of institutionalized pre-school services and remedial educational services in primary and secondary schools as well as reduced procurement costs for book packages for ECE) as well as to effectively nurture the country's human resource capital. Furthermore, the books and guidance materials included in the Bookstart book packages allow parents to engage with the children themselves, therefore eliminating the high cost of professional involvement. Thus, in financial terms, the SROI analysis revealed that:
  - For every £1 the state invests, Bookstart
    - returns a total £25 of value to society.
    - £614m of social value is generated by using £9m of Department for Education funding to leverage support from private sector partners, local authorities and primary care trusts.

In light of its significant impact in the UK, Bookstart has now been adopted by more than 24 countries across the world while Booktrust provides these affiliates with technical support in the implementation of Bookstart.

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Prison Family Learning Programme

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population
64,097,085 (2013, World Bank)
Official language
English
Total expenditure on education as % of GNP
5.5% (2010)
Total youth literacy rate (15–24 years)
Total: 100%; Male: 100%; Female: 100%
Primary school net enrolment/attendance
100% (2005–2010)
Adult literacy rate (15 years and over, 2005–2010)
Total: 99%; Male: 99%; Female: 99%

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Prison Family Learning Programme
Implementing organization
Best Start for Families
Language of instruction English
Programme partners
Learning Unlimited, Big Lottery, Camden and Islington Family Learning, and National Offender Management Service through HMP Holloway and Pentonville Prisons
Date of inception
2008

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Although the UK has achieved near universal literacy rates across all age groups (see above) due, in large part, to strong state support of education over many decades (see   http://www.unesco.org/uil/litbase/?menu=15and country=GBandprogramme=89), levels of literacy skills among prisoners are still lower than among the general population. Indeed, studies by the Prison Reform Trust and the Basic Skills Agency have revealed that 60 per cent of all prisoners in the UK have problems with basic literacy, and 40 per cent have severe literacy problems. Similarly, the Social Exclusion Unit recently reported that 80 per cent of prisoners' literacy skills (writing, reading and numeracy) are at or below the level expected of an 11-year-old child and 50 per cent of prisoners have no professional/vocational qualifications (Jones, 2010; Clark and Dugdale, 2008). The lack of basic literacy and vocational skills among prisoners – most of whom are from low socio-economic backgrounds – is a cause of great concern among stakeholders because it perpetuates the existing socio-economic inequalities in the country, prevents effective communication between prisoners and their families and slows down or even precludes the prisoners' rehabilitation and their reintegration into society once released from prison, all of which leads to high levels of offending and re-offending.

Prompted by an understanding that the socio-economic costs of crime are extremely high and the belief that the provision of quality literacy education to prisoners is potentially one of the most effective forms of prisoner rehabilitation and crime prevention, Best Start for Families (BSfF) set up the Prison Family Learning Programme (PFLP) in August 2011.

PRISON FAMILY LEARNING PROGRAMME

The PFLP is an integrated, intergenerational and in-prison non-formal educational programme which primarily targets imprisoned mothers and their children. The programme was previously implemented by the London Language and Literacy Unit (LLU+), based at the London South Bank University until August 2011 when the it was closed down. Following this closure, former employees of LLU+ formed BSfF and Learning Unlimited (LU) in order to continue implementing the PFLP. The PFLP is currently being put into practice at Holloway and Pentonville prisons by BSfF with technical and financial support from Learning Unlimited and various other organizations (see above).

The primary goal of the PFLP is to create quality family learning opportunities for imprisoned mothers and their children. Accordingly, BSfF has designed and developed an integrated programme curriculum which covers a wide range of themes or topics that specifically address the learning needs and interests of parents and their children. The themes covered during the Mothers-only learning sessions include:

- functional literacy (numeracy and writing of poems, prose, etc.);
- good parent practises (based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs and including the importance of praise, positive behaviour and discipline; managing difficult behaviour);
- the role of the parent in supporting a child's literacy development (i.e. how children learn to read, how children are taught to read, individual learning styles, etc.);
- book making.

The themes or topics covered during family learning sessions vary greatly since the primary aim is to enable parents and children to interact and learn together. The themes are therefore tailored to cover the learning needs and interests of adult and child learners and are also highly interactive and educative. Thus, the common themes covered during family learning sessions include:

- basic Literacy;
- making photograph frames using lolly sticks, cards and glue;
- composing and writing poems, rhymes, etc.;
- developing a theme-based quiz for class discussion;
- games/sport (including table tennis, table football, swimming, etc.);
- art: role plays/drama, song and dance.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

As an integrated and intergenerational educational programme, the PFLP has various aims and objectives. In particular, the programme aims to:

- create quality and sustainable learning opportunities for imprisoned mothers and their children in order to enhance their literacy skills and relationship or family bonds;

- enable imprisoned mothers to continue to proactively participate in the education and development of their children despite their imprisonment;
- enhance positive communication between imprisoned mothers and their children;
- nurture positive literacy, life and social skills among prisoners in order to facilitate their effective rehabilitation as well as to reduce the rate of re-offending and combat the scourge of crime;
- empower prisoners to effectively reintegrate into their families and communities after their release from prison;
- empower imprisoned mothers and their children to improve their literacy skills.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION: APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

In order to facilitate the efficient and sustainable implementation of the PFLP, BSfF has established functional partnerships with several institutions, including: Learning Unlimited, Big Lottery, Camden and Islington Family Learning, National Offender Management Service through HMP Holloway and HMP Pentonville Prisons. These institutions provide BSfF with critical technical and financial support necessary for the efficient and effective implementation of the PFLP. For instance, Camden and Islington Family Learning and the National Offender Management Service are currently assisting BSfF with all the financial support needed to implement the entire PFLP while Learning Unlimited plays a vital role in the training and mentoring of programme facilitators, in monitoring and managing the implementation of the programme and in the production of appropriate teaching/learning materials. In addition, prison officers from HMP Holloway and HMP Pentonville Prisons also assist BSfF in supervising programme facilitators during classes as well as in managing in-prison learning groups. Support from these institutions has been and continues to be fundamental for the efficient implementation of the PFLP.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRICULUM AND TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS

As noted above, the PFLP curriculum and teaching/learning materials, such as illustrative posters, poems and rhymes, were designed and developed by BSfF and Learning Unlimited with technical support from various institutional partners. Programme beneficiaries (prisoners) were also actively consulted and involved during the process of designing and developing the programme curriculum and teaching/learning materials. For instance, imprisoned mothers are encouraged to make personalized poem and song books for their children and, in so doing, they not only improve their literacy skills and play an active role in their children's education but they also strengthen their relationships with their children. The strategy of involving mothers in the development of the curriculum and learning materials also helps to determine their learning needs and interests in order to ensure that these are appropriately addressed.

In addition, the results of programme evaluations have also been used to review and update the curriculum and teaching/learning materials on an ongoing basis. BSfF has also adopted and adapted teaching/learning materials that were developed by other organizations such as LLU+ which used to implement a similar programme prior to September 2011. Essentially, therefore, the development of the curriculum and teaching/learning materials is achieved through a participatory and consultative process involving all key stakeholders.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF FACILITATORS

Whereas full-time programme facilitators or tutors were engaged to facilitate the practical implementation of the PFLP prior to mid-2011, currently programme facilitators and volunteers (some of whom are former prisoners) are employed on a part-time basis. All facilitators and volunteers are, nonetheless, required to possess recognisable professional qualifications and practical experience in non-formal education, especially in adult and early childhood education. In addition, and in order to ensure the effective and sustainable implementation of the PFLP, BSfF and Learning Unlimited also provide facilitators and volunteers with opportunities for professional advancement through regular and ongoing in-service training and mentoring in adult and early-childhood education as well as through participation in relevant conferences. The in-service training and mentoring sessions focus on a wide range of non-formal education including:

- non-formal education and intergenerational teaching/learning methodologies;
- management of mixed learning groups;
- psycho social practises of dealing with prisoners;
- design, development and use of teaching/learning materials;
- assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes.

Once trained, each facilitator – with assistance from a trained senior prison officer and volunteers – is entrusted with training an average of seven participants during mothers-only sessions and up to 40 participants during mixed group sessions comprising mothers and their children. They are also required to assist BSfF and Learning Unlimited in evaluating the learning outcomes on an ongoing basis. Facilitators are currently being paid a stipend of £35 (US $56) per hour.

TEACHING/LEARNING APPROACHES AND METHODS

As noted above, the PFLP is an integrated and intergenerational learning programme for imprisoned mothers and their children. Accordingly, the actual learning process is divided into two categories: (1) family learning sessions or classes, which involve mothers and their children learning together, and (2) mothers-only classes. Family learning sessions are conducted during family visiting days when children are brought to the prisons by their carers. Typically, family classes are conducted once every month and involve an average of 60 to 90 children and 20 to 40 adults. During the joint family learning sessions, parents and children work together on a wide range of common, practical and interactive activities which have been specifically designed and adapted not only to address adults and children's learning needs and interests but also to empower mothers to take an active role in the education of their children. Common family learning activities include but are not limited to:

- basic Literacy (through, for example, making photograph frames, greeting cards, posters, writing poems and simple science activities);

- composing and writing poems, rhymes, etc.;
- developing a theme-based quiz for class discussion;
- games/sport (including table tennis, table football and swimming); and
- art: role plays/drama, song and dance.

The aim of these learning activities is to positively engage families in order to improve their literacy skills as well as to strengthen family bonds.

Mothers-only classes are conducted once every week and each learning session lasts for, on average, one and a half hours. Typically, each class has about 15 learners. The actual learning process is conducted through a variety of participatory or interactive methods (such as group discussions and dialogues, question and answer, role play, demonstrations, reading and writing of poems, rhymes for their children) and is largely based on learners' personal experiences. The rationale for employing these teaching/learning strategies is to enable facilitators to determine the prisoners' primary needs and interests in order to equip them with the literacy and social skills necessary for their successful reintegration or resettlement into society once released from prison. These sessions also provide women with an opportunity to talk about the purpose of the children's visits, the aims of the activities the facilitators will be running and how the mothers will encourage their children to join in the activities with them. As a direct result of these workshops with the mothers the percentage of mothers who engage in activities with their children during the children's visits has increased.

IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Although external evaluators have not been engaged since July 2011 (when BSfF took over the implementation of the PFLP), the programme is, nonetheless, currently being evaluated on an ongoing basis by BSfF technical staff, partners, prison officials, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills and learners through field-based observations, in-depth interviews and consultations. Most importantly, programme beneficiaries also evaluate (using a standardized questionnaire) the learning outcomes through a reflective process which asks them to identify and highlight what they have learned, the impact of the programme on their lives and well-being and the challenges they faced during the entire learning process. They are also asked to make suggestions on how to improve the programme based on their learning experiences.

IMPACT

Results from the internal evaluation processes indicate that the PFLP is having an impact on the lives and well-being of female prisoners and their children. A total of 1,264 prisoners and 1,000 children have participated in the programme during the past three years. Apart from playing a vital role in strengthening family bonds (i.e. the relationship between mothers and their children), the programme has also equipped prisoners with crucial social skills which have prevented a majority of them from re-engaging in criminal activities, thus supporting them in successfully reintegrating into their families. As such, the programme has been an essential catalyst in prisoner rehabilitation, empowerment and reintegration. More specifically, the major impacts of the PFLP include:

- the development and dissemination of high-quality learning materials and guidance modules to support in-prison family learning programmes;
- the transformation of family visiting days into family learning days: this created an opportunity for imprisoned mothers to interact and learn together with their children, most of whom are in foster families and/or child-caring institutions;
- prisons (i.e. Holloway and Pentonville) have now fully embraced the principles and practise of family learning enshrined in BSfF publication, *Family Learning in Prisons: A complete guide*, as a strategy for developing their prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration schemes;
- BSfF has also created training and employment opportunities for facilitators and volunteers who are engaged as trainers or tutors. In so doing, the programme is contributing towards social and community development.

CHALLENGES

Despite its major impact as noted above, numerous challenges continue to plague the effective implementation of the PFLP:

- The programme is currently being implemented in remand prisons and, as such, there is a high turnover of prisoners due to transfers to other prisons after being sentenced or being released when acquitted. In light of this, it is extremely difficult for prisoners to continue participating in the programme and for BSfF to follow up prisoners' learning, rehabilitation and reintegration progress.
- Another major challenge has been getting prison authorities to recognize the value of family learning in promoting the development of literacy, language, numeracy and communication skills among prisoners and how this positively impacts on their long-term rehabilitation and eventual reintegration into normal society.
- The programme offers no official accreditation of learning. This dissuades some prisoners from participating in the programme.
- BSfF has also encountered numerous challenges in bringing children to prisons for family learning sessions.
- The prison environment creates unique challenges such as psychosocial problems among prisoners and lack of adequate learning spaces, all of which hinder the effective and efficient implementation of family learning programmes.
- **Funding:** BSfF can afford to pay programme facilitators 'nominal' per diems. As a result, staff turnover rates are very high which leads not only to inconsistencies with regards to programme implementation but also to increased operational costs as facilitators are regularly trained.

SUSTAINABILITY

Despite the challenges being faced, the long-term sustainability of in-prison family learning programmes in the UK is guaranteed due, in part, to increased state support of such activities and the changing attitudes among prison officials who now see the intrinsic value of family learning programmes in fostering the effective rehabilitation of prisoners. Similarly, the sustainability of the PFLP is guaranteed not only because of the above-mentioned factors, but

also because BSfF has trained many prison officers, volunteers, carers of prisoners' children and civilian staff working with prisoners in order to enable them to continue implementing this or similar programmes alongside BSfF and other organizations.

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Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population 320,051,000 (2013)

Total expenditure on education as % of GDP
5.22%

Access to primary education –
Total net enrolment rate (NIR)
96% (2011)

Adult literacy rate (ages 16 to 56)
2012 PIAAC test results:
Percentage of adults scoring at each proficiency level in literacy (Level 1 represents the lowest level of proficiency, Level 5 the highest):
Below Level 1: 3.9%
Level 1: 13.6%
Level 2: 32.6%
Level 3: 34.2%
Level 4: 10.9%
Level 5: 0.6%

Sources
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics
- OECD

A teenager writing in the Book Club at DC Jail

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop
Implementing organization
Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop
Language of instruction
English
Funding
Primary funding sources include foundation grants, local government grants and individual donors. Secondary funding includes corporate donations, in-kind donations and literary journal sales.
Annual programme costs
USD 616,686
(data from projection for fiscal year 2016 expenses)
Annual programme cost per learner:
USD 1,233 (estimated expenses and number of beneficiaries for 2016)

Date of inception
2001

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Research by the Campaign for Youth Justice suggests that, every year, as many as 200,000 young people under the age of 18 are prosecuted as adults and placed in adult jails across the United States of America. The vast majority of these young people are African Americans or Latinos. As many as 57 per cent of incarcerated young people aged between 16 and 24 are functionally illiterate (US Department of Education, 2007), and have had limited engagement with school, given that they have spent some of their formative years behind bars. Once released, they re-enter society with little formal education and few job skills, not to mention the untreated trauma of their childhoods and adolescent years in prison. Young people in the adult criminal justice system are at substantially higher risk of assault and suicide, and are likely to re-offend within the first year after their release. In Washington DC,

A teenager writing in the Book Club at DC Jail

teenagers who are incarcerated typically come from the most impoverished and crime-stricken communities in the city.

A 2013 study showed that correctional education reduced recidivism and increased the likelihood of employment after release (RAND Corporation, 2013). Data also indicate that investing in educational programming for higher-risk offenders results in the greatest reductions in overall recidivism (Pew Center on the States, 2011).

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop (Free Minds) is a non-profit organization based in Washington DC, serving young people and adults in the criminal justice system. Founded in 2002, it began as a bi-weekly book club and poetry workshop for young people aged between 15 and 17 who had been charged as adults in the prison system. Over the years, Free Minds has grown to provide other services to its beneficiaries (known as 'members' in the organization) during their incarceration and re-entry in society. It uses books, creative writing and peer support to help young people incarcerated as adults to develop to their fullest potential.

Free Minds takes a unique approach not only in its innovative use of books and writing (i.e. poetry) as

means of achieving change, but also in the comprehensive, wrap-around nature of its services. Through creative expression, job readiness training and violence-prevention outreach, these young people achieve their education and career goals, and become powerful voices for change in the community.

Since its inception in 2002, Free Minds has reached more than 950 young people through its continuum of services. It is the only organization in Washington DC that works with this group of young people throughout their incarceration and when they return home.

While the programme is open to all incarcerated 16 and 17 year olds, incarceration rates for girls are significantly lower than those for boys, with girls accounting for less than 1 per cent of Free Minds' beneficiaries. Currently (as of April 2016), there are only three young women participating in any of the three phases into which Free Minds' educational opportunities are grouped. This is why, in referring to Free Minds' beneficiaries, this case study uses male pronouns and adjectives.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of Free Minds' work is to empower incarcerated young people so that they can envisage different futures for themselves. By engaging them in reading and writing while they are incarcerated, the programme aims to give them the skills and tools they need to empower themselves and to be healthy, productive members of society, as well as powerful voices for change in the DC community. Given that the majority of beneficiaries will be released from prison, the goal is also to reduce recidivism and create a stronger, healthier society.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The programme works and across three successive phases to meet the needs of its members: during incarceration, on transfer to a federal prison once they reach the age of 18, and after release. These phases, and the various activities they comprise, support members throughout their time in prison and beyond.

1. DURING INCARCERATION
DC Jail Book Club serves 16- and 17-year-old boys, engaging them in book club discussions, creative writ-

ing exercises and guest author visits. Members take part in a book club and writing workshop twice a week. Participation is voluntary. While sessions are open to all inmates in DC jail's juvenile unit (typically between 20 and 30 youths), in practise between 12 and 14 people attend each meeting. The organization has found that this is the optimal number for group discussion. Because the jail premises are not designed to support educational programming, and space is at a premium, Free Minds staff hold book club sessions in different-sized rooms, depending on the number of participants. If necessary, facilitators split up and hold two sessions in different rooms, each facilitator working with half of the book club participants.

New members are accepted on a rolling basis. When a new teenager arrives at the DC jail, Free Minds staff meet with him one-on-one to explain the book club, conduct an intake assessment (more in the Monitoring and Evaluation section), and encourage him to attend the next meeting. In 2016, Free Minds expanded its services to include a book club with adults in the General Education Development (GED, high school equivalency degree) Unit at the jail.

Book club sessions are facilitated by trained staff, employees of Free Minds. At least two facilitators are present during each meeting. Facilitators include two senior staff with more than 13 years of experience, who serve as primary responsible facilitators and have trained colleagues. All facilitators have also attended training with the Freedom Writers Institute, an organization which provides professional development programmes for educators of vulnerable and at-risk youth. Activities implemented during the incarceration stage are offered in collaboration with the Incarcerated Youth Program, which provides high school education on the juvenile unit. To support members' reading skills development, Free Minds works with a reading specialist in the Incarcerated Youth Program, but also assist participants directly during club sessions. Where required, the organization has also benefitted from the help of a trained interpreter for Spanish-speaking members with limited English language skills.

Often, book club members report having had a negative experience of books at school. School literature did not interest them because of the difficulty they had in relating to characters and plots. To encourage a change in attitude towards books, Free Minds engages participants in reading by introducing them to authors and characters who come from similar backgrounds to theirs, and who face similar obstacles in life. To select a book to read, book club members vote on four or five books selected by facilitators in a 'book ballot'. Books are usually in the young adult or urban fiction genres, but also sometimes mystery/thriller, science fiction/fantasy, poetry, graphic novels, memoir, or other fiction or non-fiction. Examples include *Dark* by Kenji Jasper, *The Way Home* by George Pelecanos, *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely, *March: Book One* by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin, and *Tyrell* by Coe Booth. Free Minds purchases books from various booksellers.

2. DURING TRANSFER TO A FEDERAL PRISON

Federal Prison Book Club allows Free Minds to stay connected to members after they turn 18 and are transferred to federal prison by sending them books, birthday cards, letters, a monthly newsletter, Free Minds Connect, and feedback on their writing, which is published on a blog (freemindsbookclub.org/poetry-blog). Because Washington DC does not have its own federal prison, DC inmates typically spend the majority of their sentences in prisons in other states. Free Minds members in this phase participate in a correspondence-based long-distance book club, sharing their poetry and responses to book club discussion questions in the *Free Minds Connect* newsletter.

3. AFTER RELEASE

Re-entry Book Club provides mentoring to members on release by providing month-long paid job readiness and life skills apprenticeships. Apprentices practise reading and writing and participate in skills-building workshops. Staff and formerly incarcerated business owners lead workshops specifically tailored to the unique needs of this group. Topics include resumé writing, formal writing, public speaking, communication and job interviews skills, workplace problem-solving skills, budgeting and entrepreneurship. Apprentices also gain real on-the-job work experience by working shifts, paid for by Free Minds, at local contracting companies run by formerly incarcerated individuals. Each apprentice finishes the programme with a resumé, an

A Free Minds member, home from prison, with his favorite books at the Free Minds office

action plan, job experience, and placement in a job or training programme. Free Minds follows up with them weekly and provides coaching for job retention.

The programme also connects members directly with schools and potential employers, and provides assistance and space for a supportive community of fellow Free Minds members.

The **Community Outreach and Engagement** stage connects newly released Free Minds members with audiences from the community outside prison through a violence prevention initiative called On the Same Page. Free Minds members who have been released from jail visit schools, universities, juvenile detention facilities and community groups in the role of 'poet ambassadors' to share their life experiences and poetry. Free Minds members voluntarily chose to become poet ambassadors, having received training in public speaking, storytelling and communication as part of the workshops offered during their apprenticeship, where they were also able to practise sharing their poetry and life experiences in community spaces.

Free Minds poet ambassadors (programme alumni) also co-facilitate reading and writing workshops with

young adults on probation called Reading, Writing and Re-entry. Poet ambassadors who have been incarcerated and used books and writing to transform their lives, share their experiences with participants at these events and work with them to improve literacy and goal-setting so that they can successfully navigate the transition from prison to gainful employment and career fulfilment. The project uses poetry to forge understanding and make connections between incarcerated young people and the outside community.

APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

The programme adheres to best practise for positive youth development as described by the National Research Council on Community Programs to Promote Youth Development (Gootman and Eccles, 2002). An example is the organization's commitment to create a safe space for positive peer interaction during the book club sessions. Free Minds members also play an active role in their own education, which gives them a sense of belonging and autonomy, and motivates them. In the DC Jail Book Club, members vote on which books they would like to read, and facilitators are committed to providing reading material to which members can relate. Following research by the Alliance for Excellent Education, Free Minds encourages members to 'opt in'

to the programme at all levels so they become person-ally motivated to read and write, fostering a coopera-tive, discussion-based learning environment (Alliance for Excellence in Education, 2007).

PARTNERS

Free Minds has a strong partnership network with several organizations and agencies. It is this partner-ship network that enables the organization to pro-vide educational and development opportunities to its beneficiaries. Partners include the Department of Corrections, which allows the implementation of the DC Jail Book Club. Free Minds also works with the DC Incarcerated Youth Program and the DC jail library.

Other Free Minds' partners include the PEN/Faulkner Writers in Schools programme, which takes the poet ambassadors into local DC schools as part the On the Same Page community outreach activity, and brings guest authors to speak with the teenagers in the DC Jail Book Club.

Another Free Minds member, with his favourite books

PEN/Faulkner also partners with Shout Mouse Press to distribute the literary journal created by Free Minds, *The Untold Story of the Real Me*, and every DC public school library will soon carry a copy as well. The collab-oration with PEN/Faulkner and Shout Mouse Press also includes the development of a curriculum to accom-pany the publication.

For the re-entry stage of the programme, Free Minds partners with the Skyland Workforce Center, a non-profit collaborative organization designed to engage individuals, business, government and community-based organizations to serve as a hub for a range of services and opportunities for people working toward self-sufficiency through employment. The centre's col-laborative work with other organizations ensures its alumni are able to benefit from:

- computer skills courses, offered by Byte Back;
- support with job placement, provided by Jubilee Jobs;
- assistance with case management from the Samaritan Ministry;
- GED tutoring and adult basic education, provided by Southeast Ministry;
- work readiness training, offered by Strive DC;
- employment skills development, provided by Thrive DC.

As part of the Job Readiness and Personal Skill Building Apprenticeship, the organization also partners with Perspectives Premier Contractors and Clean Decisions (a cleaning company), two local companies owned and run by formerly incarcerated individuals. Clean Decisions is run by a Free Minds alumnus.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Free Minds monitors implementation through regu-lar and ongoing evaluation, with impact assessment during each phase, and actively solicits feedback from members on how services can be strengthened to better meet members' needs and improve outcomes. The organization uses Social Solutions' Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) software to measure and evaluate progress through surveys. One is the intake survey con-ducted with new members when they first join the DC Jail Book Club. Survey questions concern participants'

education, history and interests. The software is then used to track members' reading, writing and book club participation.

During the Federal Prison Book Club phase, Free Minds tracks members' engagement through the level of openness and trust displayed in their correspondence with the organization, and whether or not they request specific book titles. In the Re-entry Book Club phase, the organization tracks active members' employment and enrolment in schools or vocational programmes. Rates of recidivism are also monitored, as well as participation in community outreach events and writing workshops with young adults on probation.

Individual contact with former members on release is maintained, usually initiated by members themselves when they express their interest in participating in the Re-entry Book Club programme. When members do not provide their own contact information, Free Minds contacts their families or attorneys when possible, and also recruits former Free Minds members in the community to locate other members who may be friends or neighbours.

IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The organization gathers statistics on the following indicators:

- Non-readers becoming readers.
- Non-writers becoming writers.
- Members staying in contact after transfer to federal prison and continuing to read and write.
- Members taking concrete steps towards educational and career goals.
- Members participating in community outreach events, sharing their personal stories of change, educating the community about youth incarceration and serving as positive role models for at-risk youth;
- Members not reoffending.

When members enter the programme, only 5 per cent say they have read and enjoyed reading, and only 10 per cent have written a poem before. After participating in Free Minds, 75 per cent of members identify as active readers and 90 per cent as writers. Collectively,

Free Minds members have read more than 16,000 books and written more than 5,000 poems. Their poems can be read on Free Minds' poetry blog: free-mindsbookclub.org/poetry-blog.

In 2015, the programme's DC Jail Book Club stage achieved the following outcomes:

- 35 new members joined the club of a total of 50 members served.
- 66 per cent of members completed the weekly reading assignment.
- 78 per cent completed the weekly writing assignment.
- 90 per cent actively participated in group discussion.

The Federal Prison Book Club stage, for members over the age of 18 in federal prison, achieved the following:

- 52 new members joined of a total of 324 members served.
- Free Minds members wrote 576 letters to the Free Minds office and all received a response. Three-quarters (73 per cent) of members demonstrated openness and trust in their letters; 39 per cent requested specific books of their own choosing; and 61 per cent received books selected by staff.
- Free Minds mailed more than 1,200 books to members in federal prisons across the country.

The Re-entry Book Club stage, when members return to their home in their community, recorded the following outcomes:

- 90 members actively participated in the programme.
- 35 young men graduated from the Job Readiness and Personal Skill Building Apprenticeship.
- 35 members served as poet ambassadors as part of the On the Same Page community outreach activity;
- 73 per cent of members are currently employed (full-time or part-time), enrolled in school, or enrolled in a vocational training programme which might lead to employment.

In 2015, the recidivism rate registered by Free Minds was 10 per cent, compared to the national rate for juveniles charged as adults of between 70 per cent and 90 per cent.

Free Minds Poet Ambassadors (home from prison) perform spoken word poetry at DC's Our City Festival

TESTIMONIALS

'The book club was there for me. I needed those books! I knew I wasn't dumb. I just couldn't read. The first book I ever read all the way through was called Dark. That book was different than the books I'd been given before. The story could have been real. It looked like my own life and it grabbed my attention.'

Anthony, a Free Mind member and Free Minds poet ambassador. He now owns his own company.

'Free Minds is designed for people to succeed. That book part when I was locked up really elevated my mind. I never had access to those types of books before; they helped me to open my mind.'

Calvin, a Free Minds member, now employed in the construction industry.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Importance of providing relevant reading materials that reflect, and resonates with, beneficiaries' lives. When beneficiaries join the book club, most are disengaged from school, and frequently report that books read in school do not interest them because of the difficulty they have in relating to the characters.

- Importance of providing an outlet for members' writing. As part of the programme, members' poetry is typed and printed to be published in the organization's bimonthly newsletter and literary journal, *The Untold Story of the Real Me: Young Voices from Prison*, or is connected to other publication opportunities. Many Free Minds members report they did not believe they could write until they saw their poem in print for the first time.

CHALLENGES

- Space limitations prevent Free Minds from hosting more than approximately 12 to 14 young people at their DC Jail Book Club each week.

- Lack of youth-oriented services for Free Minds members who are in the adult criminal justice system. This is compounded by a unique situation in DC (it is neither its own state nor is part of one): because the district does not have its own prison, DC inmates serve the majority of their sentences in federal prisons in other states. They are transferred frequently, so Free Minds staff are constantly searching for members' new addresses. Members are separated from their families and friends, and cannot access re-entry programming for the community they will be re-entering (DC) as they have been incarcerated in prisons in other states.

- There is no point person in the Bureau of Prisons overseeing DC inmates. Free Minds compensates for this by staying in frequent contact with members through mail (letters, books, a newsletter), and by communicating about DC-specific re-entry resources through a newsletter published every two months.

- Challenge in providing adequate programming to help members in the Re-entry Book Club phase cope and recover from Post-Incarceration Syndrome (PIS), a form of post-traumatic stress sustained as a result of being incarcerated for prolonged periods of time. PSI often results in psychological effects such as learned helplessness and anxiety. Free Minds has addressed this challenge in three ways: 1) through a concerted effort to connect members with formerly incarcerated mentors through the apprenticeship programme – the mentors serve as credible messengers and living proof that it is pos-

sible to be successful after being incarcerated; 2) by adding a workshop on anger management led by a social worker to the Job Readiness and Personal Skill Building Apprenticeship programme as well as *pro-bono* counseling services; and 3) by providing encouragement to members to express themselves through creative writing as a way to process difficult emotions and recover from trauma.

- In 2015 and 2016 a pilot programme was conducted. The pilot comprised a non-accredited correspondence course on African-American literature for a small number of Free Minds members in federal prison. The goal of the project was to offer an educational opportunity (albeit non-accredited) for inmates serving lengthy sentences. There have been several challenges in the implementation of this course due to members losing access to course materials when transferred to other prisons or to solitary confinement.

SUSTAINABILITY

An important factor in ensuring the sustainability of the educational and development offer of Free Minds is the extended partnership network the organization has in DC.

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Reach Out and Read

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population 320,051,000 (2013)

Total expenditure on education as % of GDP
5.22%

**Access to primary education –
total net enrolment rate (NIR)**
96% (2011)

Adult literacy rate (ages 16 to 56)
2012 PIAAC test results:
Percentage of adults scoring at each proficiency
level in literacy (Level 1 represents the lowest
level of proficiency, Level 5 the highest):
Below Level 1: 3.9%
Level 1: 13.6%
Level 2: 32.6%
Level 3: 34.2%
Level 4: 10.9%
Level 5: 0.6%

Sources
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics
- OECD

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Reach Out and Read (ROR)
Implementing organization
Reach Out and Read, a non-profit organization
Language of instruction
English
Funding
Since the existing infrastructure of the primary
care system is leveraged, the literacy intervention
has low overheads. To provide resources for the
programme, donors at national, federal and local
levels all come together, including in particular:

- local and national foundations and corporations
in eleven states such as book publisher Scholastic,
the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Target and Primrose
Schools;
- the ROR National Center itself, which typically
raises about USD 4 million each year;
- regional coalitions, which collectively raise
about USD 8 million annually;
- the actual ROR programme sites (the hospitals,
health centres, and paediatric clinics), which raise
several million dollars as well for books for their
programme;
- corporations, foundations, individuals, in-kind
book donations, and, in some cases, government
grants.
In former years the US Department of Education
used to support ROR.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The United States of America (USA) is a rich, industrial-
ized country with a gross domestic product (GDP) per
capita of USD 51,749 in 2012 (World Bank, 2012). Since
compulsory education lasts 12 years, from age 6 to age
17, educational attainment in terms of enrolment rates
in primary and secondary education is at a reportedly
high level. However, while there are no international
literacy proficiency data available, according to the US
Department of Education (DoED) (National Center for
Education Statistics, 2013) 17.5 per cent of adults (aged 15

years and older) in the United states have insufficient literacy skills of level 1 or below . According to the 2013 OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) (OECD, 2013), literacy performance in the United States is below the average of all OECD countries participating in the PIAAC survey. The literacy proficiency of 82 per cent of Hispanic or Latino fourth-graders was not sufficient in terms of the Basic achievement of reading up to 129 words per minute in 2011. It is known that socio-economic background has a major impact on literacy skills and the PIAAC study shows both below-average performance in literacy as well as large social disparities in the United States' educational sector.

Illiteracy is said to have had an impact on the ability of the United States to compete in the global economy. According to James Heckman (2011), the return on investment generated in the USA is 7 per cent to 10 per cent per year with every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education. There are several family literacy approaches, such as the federal initiative Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), launched in 2001 to broaden the scope of educational activities to adults from deprived areas and their children, including those who speak languages other than English. In 2013 the USA adopted the Strong Start for America's Children Act (Committee on Education and the Workforce, Democrats, 2013), which aims to foster high-quality early childhood education towards success in school as well as promoting parental spiritual support of their children in obtaining basic skills.

Addressing especially families with a lower socio-economic or migrant background, the family literacy programme Reach Out and Read (ROR) aims to contribute to improving the situation regarding primary education in the USA. Enabling young people to function in society, ROR also promotes family interaction through the access to and use of books.

THE REACH OUT AND READ PROGRAMME

Reach Out and Read, a non-profit organization, was founded in 1989 at Boston City Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts by paediatric physicians Barry Zuckerman and Robert Needlman and early childhood educator Kathleen Fitzgerald-Rice. Its national literacy programme tackles the problem that many children entering school are unprepared to learn. In recognition of the fact that parents are young children's first and most important teachers, ROR was implemented as a national and federal family literacy programme. Based on the statements that early childhood experiences significantly affect achievements later in life and that young children learn best from caring parents, the programme intends to improve early language skills and fosters family communication and interactivity. At the core of ROR is the power of parents and the influence of children's doctors, giving parents the main role in this programme through reading aloud to their children. This is complemented by encouragement and advice by medical providers, relying on their positive influence on children. In short, ROR helps prepare young children for school and life through providing developmentally-appropriate books (in some cases also bilingual books) and advising their parents about the importance of reading aloud.

SETTING AND TARGET AUDIENCE

The interventions take place in the setting of regular paediatric check-ups within the existing healthcare infrastructure, but the learning environment in the home of the families also plays an important role, because at home the parents take an active role when they are reading to their children. The programme is focused on families with a low socio-economic or migrant background.

Within special initiatives targeted at communities such as Spanish-speaking, American Indian or Alaska Native populations, and children with developmental delays, the ROR intervention has been especially beneficial.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

ROR's main aims are:

- to contribute to the advancement of sustainable literacy in the USA
- to ensure that all children grow up with a love of books and parents who read aloud to them.

Its objectives in pursuing these aims are:

- delivering literacy intervention to families;

- changing parental attitudes and practises and promoting better parental care;
- developing early reading skills and school readiness;
- improving reading skills and literacy-related outcomes in school;
- improving book availability and serving all children living in poverty by providing access to books to underserved families with limited access to print materials;
- improving the overall well-being of the participating paediatric clinics' communities;
- reducing the need for costly remedial education through preventative measures.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The programme was first implemented in 1989. In the beginning it focused only on providing books for paediatric waiting rooms, but it has since grown and today includes integration into the developmental surveillance element of regular 'well-child' check-ups for children aged from 6 months to 5 years. In the course of each visit, families are given one new book, appropriate to their age and culture, so that they build up a home library of at least 10 books before the child enters school.

TEACHING/LEARNING
APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

With a special emphasis on children growing up in low-income communities, families are guided by paediatricians through the essential early years, engaging parents to become their child's first teacher by demonstrating how enjoyable and effective reading aloud with their children can be. In particular, paediatricians ensure that families have developmentally-appropriate books at home and they show parents how to

incorporate books into their daily life so that both parents and children discover the joy of the written word. Medical providers communicate to parents that reading aloud is just as vital to their child's school success as vaccinations, healthy food and physical activity. Because of the trust inherent in the doctor-patient relationship, parents are more likely to take this read-aloud advice to heart than if they were approached by someone they do not know.

Using the book as the tool and putting into practice the training from ROR, medical providers offer parents literacy advice which is incorporated into the well-child check-ups. Talking to the parents, they emphasize the importance of reading aloud as a way to help children develop foundational language skills, because most of the parents underestimate the importance of early exposure to language for brain development and its relation to the child's success in school and beyond.

TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT OF
MEDICAL PROVIDERS AND VOLUNTEERS

All ROR doctors and nurses are exposed to the training model, which is being improved by ROR continuously. They learn how to choose age- and developmentally-appropriate books for children, and how to best introduce a new book during the well-child visit. There are also comprehensive training modules for special initiatives within the programme, which meet the needs of particular interest groups such as Spanish-speaking participants.

To take part in the programme, medical providers have to fill in an online application form and state their commitment to the Reach Out and Read programme. Before starting to implement ROR in their medi-

cal practise they have to complete online training. While staff training is primarily done online, in some instances, face-to-face training sessions are held by medical providers experienced in the ROR model.

Volunteer readers – who may be retired professionals, young adults performing community service, stay-at-home mothers, or other individuals with daytime availability – spend time in the clinic or hospital waiting room and read to children who are waiting to see the doctor. These volunteer readers demonstrate a positive reading experience with children and model reading aloud for parents, providing helpful tips for getting children excited about books. They engage children around a story by pointing out pictures, using different voices for characters in the books, and ask questions about the story. These techniques, known as dialogic reading, help children learn from the books through their active involvement.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN ROR AND THE MEDICAL PARTNERS

Approaching the target group is particularly easy using the existing medical infrastructure. None of the participating 20,000 medical providers receive any payment because they include the programme in their work on a voluntary basis and incorporate the literacy intervention into their paediatric care. They do this because they believe in the power of literacy and the importance of reading aloud in the home.

Most of the medical providers have a local or state contact they can turn to with questions or thoughts about the programme, books, events and marketing materials. If there is no local contact in the state or region where the provider lives and works, they can contact

the National Center in Boston from where they will be directed to the appropriate person.

REACHING THE LEARNERS

Parents and their children are only approached by participating paediatric clinics or offices. All visiting children from the ages of 6 months to 5 years and their parents automatically participate in the programme, receive books during the well-child visits and get advice from the medical provider about the importance of reading aloud in the home. Since the children and families, even those from poor socio-economic backgrounds, visit their paediatrician regularly (approximately twice a year) for well-child check-ups, follow-up during these visits is guaranteed by the medical providers. Each child takes part in the programme for 5 years.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Schools conduct external vocabulary tests as entrance criteria. These tests are outside the scope of ROR, but they provide a good opportunity to assess the impact and success of the project.

ROR is an evidence-based intervention supported by 15 independent published research studies related to the medical sector. It is known that parents served by ROR are up to four times more likely to read aloud to their children than they would be without having participated, and that the programme really does reach the child through effectively teaching the parent to start lifelong learning in the home.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring of the programme happens through bi-annual progress reports submitted by clinics, annual medical provider surveys and face-to-face evaluations. This allows for a nationwide comparison of clinics, identifying trends and addressing problems, coordinated by the ROR staff.

IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Most families regularly visit paediatric clinics for well-child check-ups, although it is not compulsory to do so. This is the key for the programme's great impact, because the result is that paediatricians are using a

broad and powerful opportunity to reach children and families.

The programme is continuously expanding and new programme sites and medical providers are brought aboard each month. Without a doubt, ROR is making an impact on the participating children. During the pre-school years, children served by ROR score three to six months ahead of their non-ROR peers on vocabulary tests. These early foundational language skills help start children on a path of success when they enter school.

ROR is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP). Furthermore it received a four-star rating from Charity Navigator, denoting exceptional performance which exceeds standards and outperforms most charities in its field. In 2013 the Library of Congress devoted the David M. Rubenstein Prize to the organization.

In the course of one year, 4 million children are served by means of 6.5 million distributed books and 20,000 medical providers. There were 5,000 programme sites in 50 states and districts of the USA. Parents taking part in the programme were rated more receptive and mothers stated that they were two times more likely to read with their children than after taking part in the programme (Jones et al., 2000). Carrie Byington et al. (2008) indicate that the families were grateful for the engagement of the staff in the clinics and for the books received as well as doctors' and nurses' support in their family's literacy advancement.

Research has shown that promoting literacy readiness according to the ROR model affects parental behaviour and attitudes towards reading aloud as well as improving the language scores of young children who participate. Studies have proven that ROR has a positive effect on early development and the corresponding learning outcomes. Research also found that the programme changed parents' ways of thinking, because they not only read more often to their children (High et al., 2000), but also purchased more books (Theriot et al., 2003), improved their own language skills (Mendelsohn, 2001) and reported that reading was one of their three favourite things to do with their child (Golova, 1989).

ROR has been found to improve the receptive and expressive language scores of high-risk urban families as well as ensuring that parents read aloud more often to their children. Moreover it has been established that there is a positive correlation between advancements in receptive and expressive language scores, the number of books purchased by a family and the number of reading-enhanced well-child visits children have attended (Theriot et al., 2003). In cases where bilingual material is provided, parents are also more likely to read out to their children than before (Golova, 1989).

In conclusion, while ROR reaches the child through effectively teaching the parent to start lifelong learning in the home, parents served by ROR are up to four times more likely to read aloud to their children than before, while the children are being well prepared to start school on target.

TESTIMONIALS

'My kids actually look forward to going to the doctor because they know they're getting a book.'
- **ROR mother**

'It is overwhelming to see my kids grow, to watch them learn, to know that I am a part of this process with them.'
- **ROR father**

CHALLENGES

It has been difficult to engage medical providers in the project, since there is no direct advantage for them while they have to schedule extra time for their own training and for advising parents. Though initially the organization faced a challenge in reaching the parents most in need because they are often the most socially

isolated and might not come to a paediatric clinic, ROR is now operating in all 50 states and serves children in both urban and rural communities. Working through paediatricians is effective, because more children see a paediatrician in the early years than any other service provider.

For any non-profit organization, funding is always a challenge. ROR is continuously seeking out new funding sources to further strengthen and expand the organization. Given that ROR is a national organization which has grown in a somewhat organic manner, keeping programme delivery strong and consistent across all providers has been a challenge. A few years ago, a quality improvement initiative was established to ensure that high-quality delivery of the programme is maintained and to enable medical providers to strengthen both their connection to ROR and the literacy culture of their clinics, because the success of the implementation is related to the culture of the clinic. In fact there were clinics which struggled to implement ROR, but in these cases a lack of communication was reported and staff found their job burdensome. King et al. (2009) stated that in successful clinics the staff worked as a team and expressed strong commitments to their communities.

LESSONS LEARNED

Experience shows that the most likely problem ROR encounters relates to illiteracy or inexperience of parents in the role of a teacher. Therefore, reading volunteers were engaged to support particularly those parents who were in need. Possible language barriers of parents and children are successfully addressed through providing bilingual books and encouraging parents to read out loud using their mother tongue in addition to the English language.

Furthermore, clinics struggling with implementation or programme quality receive additional, targeted support from ROR. Many parents think education starts in school. ROR is trying to combat that notion and engage parents to serve as their child's first and most important teacher. Learning begins in the home, and begins with exposure to reading and language skills from birth. Accepting this idea can be a challenge for some parents, and ROR is always working to improve the delivery of that message.

SUSTAINABILITY

The first indicator for a certain level of sustainability is the fact that ROR has been running continuously since 1989 and has been extended to its current nationwide operation. Second, it has achieved considerable increases in both receptive and expressive language scores for high-risk children. The responsible organization Reach Out and Read has furthermore secured the sustainability of its programme through its cooperative agreements with various partners and support from the US Department of Education. The strength of the organization lies in its partnerships and its continuous efforts towards alignment with other like-minded organizations, foundations and individuals. ROR was thrilled to celebrate its 25th birthday in 2014 and is looking forward to one day serving even more children in the United States with literacy problems, especially those affected by poverty.

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Reading and Writing In Unit 33: Mothers, Children and Educational Institutions

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population
42,538,000 (2013)

Official language
Spanish

Youth literacy late (15–24 years)
Total: 99.3% (2015); Male: 99.13%; Female: 99.48%

Adult literacy rate (15 years and over)
Total: 98.09% (2015); Male: 98.04%; Female: 98.13%

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Reading and Writing In Unit 33: Mothers, Children and Educational Institutions

Implementing organization
Outreach Secretariat of the Faculty of Humanities and Education Science University. National University of La Plata (UNLP)/Provincial Directorate for Early Education (DPEI). Directorate General for Culture and Education of the Province of Buenos Aires.

Language of instruction
Spanish

Funding
Provincial Directorate for Early Education (DPEI), Directorate General for Culture and Education of the Province of Buenos Aires, National University of La Plata (UNLP).

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Argentina is one of the largest economies of South America, with a GDP of more than US $540,000 million. During the past decade, the country has grown steadily and has invested heavily in health and education, areas in which it spends 8 per cent and 6 per cent of GDP respectively. The early development of popular education has given Argentina one of the highest literacy rates in the world. According to the 2013 United Nations Human Development Index, Argentina ranked 40th in education quality worldwide and second in Latin America. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses' (INDEC) National Population, Household and Housing Census, Argentina has a literacy rate of 98.1 per cent.

Under the 2006 Education Act, education is obligatory for children aged from 5 to 18 years. At all levels of education there are public and private educational institutions, but the state guarantees free education in all of them, with the exception of postgraduate university courses.

In Argentina, there are penal institutions at the federal level (through the Federal Penitentiary Service), with units located throughout the country at the provincial level. The 23 provinces have their own prisons, generally organized in the form of a provincial penitentiary service or similar model. Unit 33, which has implemented the programme studied here, is accountable to the Penitentiary Service of the Province of Buenos Aires.

To address inequality and violations of the right to education in contexts of imprisonment, in July 2011, Law No. 26.695 was enacted, amending the education chapter of the law on the enforcement of custodial sentences. Article 133 of the law provides that, 'All people deprived of their liberty have the right to public education. The National Government, the provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires have the responsibility, which may not be delegated, to give priority to comprehensive, permanent and quality education for all people deprived of their liberty in their jurisdictions, guaranteeing equal access free of charge in the exercise of this right [...]'.

Unit 33 was inaugurated on 29 March 1999. The major feature of this establishment is that it has a wing for

the accommodation of pregnant inmates and mothers with children under four years old. The place where the children are housed is adapted in order to limit the impact on the children of their mother's life in prison. Inside the establishment, there is access to primary and secondary education and vocational training. In addition, through an agreement with the National University of La Plata (UNLP), inmates can take university courses in Law, Sociology and Journalism.

In addition, 'Reading and writing in Unit 33: Mothers, children and educational institutions' is an initiative taken by the National University of La Plata, in collaboration with the Provincial Directorate for Early Education (DPEI) of the Directorate General for Culture and Education of the Province of Buenos Aires. The project aims to expand the cultural rights of prison inmates, working with women and children to enhance interaction through cultural practises based around reading, writing and other forms of expression such as music, games and cinema.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

The project is being carried out in Unit 33 prison in the province of Buenos Aires, located in Los Hornos, near La Plata. Unit 33, operating under the responsibility of the Buenos Aires Penitentiary Service, is a women's prison unit, with wings that house pregnant women and mothers and children up to the age of four years. It develops a range of coordinated actions in non-formal education based around social practises of language and other forms of expression. In this project, women and children are provided with cultural practises that they are entitled to exercise and enhance in various situations of social interaction. Launched in 2010 as an outreach project of the National University of La Plata, since then it has been under the management of the Provincial Directorate for Early Education of the Province of Buenos Aires.

From 2010 until today, the project has supported the following coordinated actions:

a. Workshop entitled 'La Ronda (The Circle): stories, poems and songs', aimed at mothers and children;
b. Training proposals, aimed at nursery school teachers of children who attend schools outside the prison unit;

c. Joint management with provincial government agencies responsible for addressing the rights of detainees, in particular, the Provincial Directorate for Early Education (DPEI).

In 2010, 50 women and 30 children were enrolled; in 2011, 45 women and 35 children; in 2012, 41 children; in 2013, 68 children and in 2014, 67 children. There is no data available on how many women enrolled during the years 2012, 2013 and 2014.

'La Ronda' – together with the programmes on the national television channel for children called Pakapaka – are the only educational proposals for the children inside the prison. They do not have their own physical space and recreational needs or a space in which they can find daily educational experiences outside the prison wings. At present, there is only a physical space for the adults' school where other workshops run simultaneously for various groups of women, including a theatre workshop, a sewing workshop and guitar lessons.

In support of the rights of mothers and children living in prison, for some years now the project has been promoting, in various governmental circles, the creation of a playroom in Unit 33, organized by teachers specialized in children's education so that the children can share formative experiences outside school hours in interaction with mothers who are willing to participate. The aim is to promote the creation of a quality space where 'La Ronda' can enhance educational opportunities in daily activities of exchanges with books and readers, games and recreational materials for different ages as well as musical and artistic experiences that can be sustained with continuity in the daily life of the prison (while encouraging the attendance of all children in nursery and infant schools outside). Together with other decisions that promote better living conditions for mothers and children in prison, the educational space is one of their rights.

GOALS AND TARGETS
The main goals of the programme are as follows:

■ Provide a space for exchanges around reading and writing and other forms of expression, as cultural practises that mothers and children are entitled to exercise and enhance in various situations of social interaction.

- Support the educational paths of the children based on the guarantee of their inclusion and schooling in nursery and infant schools near the prison and their educational continuity when they are out of the prison.
- Promote training for nursery school teachers who assist children outside the prison unit in order to improve the educational opportunities of the pupils and, at the same time, support action for the rights of mothers to know and participate in the school activities of their children.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

TEACHING/LEARNING APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

The project is aimed at women and children from birth to four years old, housed in Unit 33. The actions are organized in three areas of work:

(1) 'La Ronda' workshop

'La Ronda' is a non-school workspace that enables interaction among women and between women and children, based around written culture and other forms of expression and cultural practises, which are either non-existent or very limited in prison settings. The workshop takes place within the prison unit twice a week, in two-hour meetings throughout the school year (March to December). The proposals for mothers and children are planned on a bimonthly basis and are reformulated following the analysis of documentation gathered from the records of each meeting, including the recording of dialogues in the workshops, interviews with mothers and productions from the workshops. Initially conceived as a single workshop for mothers and children, it was then divided into two distinct and simultaneous spaces owing to the need for women to have their own space in which to interact with adults. Mothers can choose in which of the two workshops they wish to participate. The workshops take place simultaneously in two separate spaces in the hall of the adults' school in the unit. On one side of the hall is the children's workshop, including the mothers who wish to participate, and on the opposite side of the hall is the women's workshop, enclosed by a circle of chairs next to a small library which contains books for adults, children and babies.

The children's workshop is divided into three activities, with particular features according to age:

- Exploration of books by the children. Reading by the adults and exchanges around the readings and the books.
- Playtime with different materials.
- Closing of the meeting with songs, rounds, body games and puppets.

The playtime and closing activities aim to enrich the participants and provide enjoyment. Different songs are offered, with poetic texts or word games which form part of the children's learning. This enhances the experiences offered during the exploration of books, but does not seek to have a direct link with the readings of the first activity.

The women's workshop has been changing over time, following the requests of the participants and the proposals of the organizers. It was established as a space for meeting and exchange around literary reading, the loan of books, meetings with music and short films, proposals for personal writing, building games for the children, and producing and presenting theatre and puppet shows for the children.

Some of the topics referred to concern the natural and social environment, proposed in projects for older infant school children. These can include reading material from the library of "La Ronda". The idea is that women in the unit find ways to link themselves with the educational activities of the infant school. In 'La Ronda' these issues are not dealt with specifically with the children or the women.

(2) Public nursery and infant schools under the Provincial Directorate for Early Education of the Province of Buenos Aires

Actions are carried out with teachers, managers and inspectors from three institutions close to the prison unit attended by the children.

Some actions:
- Regular meetings in the institutions for didactic work with the teaching teams.
- Production of material for the implementation of a school project; exploration and contribution of

informative books selected in the library of 'La Ronda' for children to take to nursery or infant school; participation of mothers in a school reading project for all pupils in nursery or infant school, based on the selection of literary texts and written production of recommendations on the works.

- Organization of meeting spaces in the prison unit with the participation of teachers, to provide information on educational institutions and their value to children (for example, informative meetings with photographic media, of the nursery and infant schools and workshops with activities that are carried out in those institutions); conversations between teachers and mothers and information/follow-up meetings; circulation between teachers and mothers of notes in notebooks in order to comment on aspects of the daily life of the children; frequent circulation of the children's work carried out at nursery or infant school.

The Directorate of Continuing Education of the Province of de Buenos Aires has participated in this action since 2013 and the regional technical teams work with technical assistance in the nursery and infant schools.

(3) Periodical coordination meetings between university teams, the Provincial Directorate for Early Education (DPEI) and other education providers, of the Penitentiary Service, of the Provincial Directorate for Criminal Policy and other governmental bodies
The purpose of these meetings is to make progress in the joint management of actions in addressing the issues identified.

Meetings of technical assistance with teachers, managers and inspectors of the nursery and infant schools that the children attend are held on a monthly basis.

Meetings are held for the organization and establishment of agreements with educational and penitentiary staff considering the needs recorded in the development of the work.

PROGRAMME CONTENT, TEACHING MATERIAL
The offers of formal education in the prison unit correspond to primary school and secondary school. The women who belong to these schools have the freedom to decide whether they wish to participate

in the workshop. There are 128 women enrolled in the primary school and between 30 and 40 women attending the secondary school.

The women's workshop is structured around the following:

a. A table of books selected from the library: exploration and choice of material, awaiting the arrival of participants. Exchanges on the books explored.
b. Reading of varied texts and exchanges between readers. On some occasions, exchanges are made on cinema and artistic expressions. The coordinator reads for everyone and opens the floor to exchanges on the texts, then the reading is shared. On other occasions, whoever offers to read aloud does so for the others. In this way, whoever is unable to read by themselves does so through other readers.
c. The closing song, proposed by the team and/or participants, is also shared with the mothers and children.

Along with books, photocopies have an important place. Individual folders contain all sorts of papers: poems, couplets, compliments, texts that can be chosen from a box and read aloud may be rehearsed during the preceding week, lyrics of songs sung at the closing of each meeting, texts written by the participants in the workshops or their cells. The folder allows continuity for some of the readings in other spaces and for other people and, at the same time, allows them to have material of their own (which is highly appreciated in this context).

In the 'La Ronda' workshop, there is an annual schedule that is reviewed in bimonthly meetings. The nursery and infant schools follow the curriculum designed by the Provincial Directorate for Early Education (DPEI) of the province of Buenos Aires.

The technical equipment, play materials, furniture for the library and provision of books for adults and children are acquired through subsidies from the National University of La Plata (UNLP) and NGO donations.

The play areas and books are provided by the Directorate for Socio-Educational Policies of the Nation and is managed through the education in prison settings modality in the province of Buenos Aires.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TRAINERS

The programme has six facilitators who have training in education. The number of participants ranges between three and 25 per meeting and most of them are women, with the exception of one man who participated in the workshop and others who were invited to participate at end-of-year events (such as musicians). The variation in numbers of participants is a particularity of the work context. Throughout the project, the workshop coordinators are teachers of early education, professors in Education Sciences and advanced students in Psychology and Education Sciences in the Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences at the National University of La Plata.

As this is an outreach project, those who participate through the university do so on a voluntary basis as part of their professional training. Four staff were hired by DPEI, so they participated in the project as paid employees. The salary of theses facilitators is 7,000 Argentine pesos (on average), the equivalent of around $744.86, although in some cases they also perform other educational tasks at DPEI.

In 2015, the programme had four employment contracts for the educators working on the project (in two cases the contract included other activities). The contracts have an annual cost of 280,000 Argentine pesos ($17,047). As a university outreach project, there are also voluntary workers. In the case of the director, the management of the centre falls under her academic activities.

As complementary training for trainers, the work meetings and bibliographic materials open spaces for professional growth.

ENROLMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Personal contact with the women, through visits to the prison wings by the task force, has been the best way to publicize the activities, along with informative posters and dissemination by participants.

There are different levels between the women who attend the workshop. In some cases, they are illiterate or have reading and writing difficulties, but most can read texts and share writing produced by themselves.

PARTICIPANT LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT ASSESSMENT

Assessments are made through the following:

- Reports of each meeting
- Recordings of dialogues in workshop situations
- Interviews with mothers

Productions in the workshop highlight the positive effects of the proposals of those who participate in 'La Ronda'.

In particular, the learning by the children through literary, play and musical experiences is notable. With regard to books, for example, the small children request those that they wish to re-explore, mentioning characters or passages in the stories, stopping and making observations and extensive and detailed comments about images and texts, and anticipating texts that the reader is reading when they re-visit some of the books. The games become more enhanced and complex; the songs become part of the repertoire that mothers and children sing, not just in 'La Ronda' but also in the prison wings.

Interviews are conducted systematically on the workshops devoted to women. In the first years of the project, the participants comment mainly on the opportunity to learn how to read and on the value of shared reading for their own subjectivity as well as the possibility of discovering in the texts elements of their own lives. Some of those interviewed said that shared reading was an activity that they had never experienced, and very different from reading alone; others said that it gave them the opportunity to practise something that they had rarely been able to do and enabled some to recover the lost value of reading and writing. Participation in the workshop enabled them to discover unknown facets of their other companions and the possibility of being surprised by words themselves, something hitherto unknown to them (Bety says, 'I had never heard such words come out of my mouth, like they came out of a book').

To attract participants' interest in learning to read, for example, for women who have difficulties spelling (a problem encountered at school), the coordinators use the following strategy. Participants select or are

given a text that someone else has read previously. In this way, reading is not only seen by them as 'putting sounds to the letters', but having heard the meaning of the text they try to make sense of it, coordinating the information and not just the letters. It has been observed that even those who had great difficulty at first, made significant progress in doing it for themselves, with the desire to do so.

On some occasions, following on from 'La Ronda', other spaces and forms of interaction started, based on language practises. Readings are shared in cells and books for adults and children circulate in the prison wings.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The performance of the facilitators is monitored through the reading of weekly or fortnightly documentation of the work done in the prison, the team meetings analysing the work process, the needs and the obstacles encountered. Coordination includes meetings with other provincial bodies. These actions enable the evaluation of the project.

No external evaluation of the programme has been undertaken.

IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES

IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The Directorate of Continuing Education has planned and initiated actions in order for technical teams to work with nursery and infant schools attended by children from other prison units such as, for example, the Federal Penitentiary in Ezeiza and San Nicolas prison in the Province of Buenos Aires.

Another important outcome is that the officer responsible for early education in prisons of the Province of Mendoza visited 'La Ronda' to learn from the experience of the work undertaken.

DPEI disseminates material on literary reading for all nursery and infant schools in the province, inspired by the work situations tested and analysed in 'La Ronda', which is considered to be another important achievement.

SOME TESTIMONIALS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

According to the participants, 'La Ronda' was a very good opportunity for them. For example, Marta describes 'La Ronda' as a space where it was possible to recover what she had lost: laughter, a little freedom, a living space. Yole considers that it was a milestone in her life, a place that allowed her to start communicating, stop being called 'dumb' and addressing personal issues: 'Here, I began to talk [...] whereas before, in the street, or even when I arrived here, they called me "dumb" because I didn't speak'. All of the participants commented on the place of reading in their own subjectivity, the possibility of 'inhabiting other worlds', and, from there, reading their own 'between the lines' (Petit, 1999). Marta expresses renewed interest in books and tells how, through them, she can find traces of her own history: 'there is a lot in common [...] I find sentences or stories or things that are like my life'.

For some interviewees, shared reading was an activity that they had never experienced; for others, it was an opportunity to learn to read, to practise something that they had rarely been able to do or to recover the lost value of reading and writing. Mara's experience enabled her to find the answer to a longstanding question: the meaning of reading for readers (why did people sit reading on trains and at stations, or buy books, in the places where she went to steal?). She says, 'Now I understand that I am doing, what these people were doing and I can do it when I am free again [...] Nobody ever used to read to me or tell me stories, but here they do [...]'.

Entering fictional worlds in interaction with others is different when it is done alone. 'La Ronda' provides the opportunity to do so in company. It is a highly valued social practise for all. In Tamara's words, 'For me, it would be perfect if you continued incorporating ideas. This is good, and we can contribute. But a library for me alone does not make any sense ... if I read a book on my own, with whom would I share what I read?'. Tamara refers to a broadly addressed issue from the theoretical field: the necessary coexistence between the provision of books and access to these materials of culture. Biographical materials, but with readers who can exchange with each other, where the power to contribute is shared between the participants and the coordinators.

A sentence can summarize a set of expressions recorded in the interviews: in the workshop, they do not seem to be the same as in the prison wings. They feel different because of how they are considered. Both young and older adults share this view. Discovering others was as relevant as being surprised at the word itself. A power hitherto unknown. Following on from 'La Ronda' other spaces and forms of interaction have started, based on language practises in cells and books for adults and children circulating in the prison wings. Patricia says, 'In prison wing 2, I would go and read to my companions and we would laugh at the riddles. There were eight of us there, in my cell we would get together'.

CHALLENGES

The conditions of the prison context in which the project is being implemented are similar to those described in studies and reports on penitentiary units. Within the framework of this type of institution – where control takes primacy over the well-being of people and treatment works in favour of obedience – women's prisons, in turn, have particular features, such as greater difficulties to access formal education and greater isolation in terms of contact with their families, especially with their children and partners (*Women in prison. The scope of punishment*. 2011). As to the mothers who live with their children, they do not have adequate accommodation – they share cells in the prison wings – or specific places for play and activities with their children.

Another important challenge for the project is to include the facilitators, who participate in the project as permanent staff for this type of activity in prison.

LESSONS LEARNED

From the outset, an obstacle became clear. Although the activity always started at the same time, not all the participants arrived at the same time. This depended particularly on the staff in charge of the roll call in the prison wings. With regard to attendance, some women attended consistently, while others went on an occasional basis, either for personal reasons or owing to circumstance (prison visits, telephone calls, occupations, physical safety, depression, illness, requisition, internal conflicts). In view of these conditions, we scheduled different times in both workshops, which

were sustained throughout the year, so everybody could be included in the development of 'La Ronda' without a problem.

From the beginning of the project, it was evident that women, with or without children in the unit, needed their own space to assess their journey, where they reconnect with their own experiences in order to build collective experiences, the reparative value of which has already been documented in critical contexts of marginalization and confinement.

The following is highlighted:
- The importance of coordinating actions between school and non-school areas for activities, in order to promote the education proposals. In this sense, 'La Ronda' is designed as a non-school activity coordinated with similar proposals that are promoted in the nursery and infant schools attended by the children who live in the unit. Such coordination enhances the opportunities for a variety of activities involving reading and writing and other forms of expression, in both children and adults. At the same time, co-management with state agencies is considered relevant for its sustainability, in order to progress in the area of public policies with regard to the rights of those who live in prison.
- For the formation of the workshop and its ownership by the participants, the sustained presence of the space and the regular attendance of the team builds confidence in the participants in a context where discontinuity and fragmentation usually predominates. As a team, it was learned that the number of participants fluctuates and that, on occasion, there can be a lack of attendance.
- The continuity of the work situations organized and themes to be addressed over time makes these proposals more predictable in a context characterized by discontinuity in attendance and flexibility in the arrival time of its participants.
- The design of 'La Ronda' in two workshops close to each other but separate, providing choice to its participants, is an appropriate option for mothers and children who live in prison settings.
- The creation of a space for interaction between books and readers is strengthened by the provision of quality materials and varied exchange proposals, where readers have the right to suggest the

inclusion of new works. Books alone are not enough to form or expand a community of readers; the activities that are practised with them are indispensable for their establishment.

- The periodic registration of the activities developed by the team and discussion about them are indispensable to support and/or review the proposals implemented.

SUSTAINABILITY

It is expected that, as a university outreach project that began in 2010, it will be completed at the end of 2017, and its management will be continued by the provincial bodies that have participated from its inception to the present day.

Following on from the project, several activities have been promoted, many of which have been proposed by governmental bodies, including the Provincial Directorate for Early Education of the province of Buenos Aires. For example, the intervention protocol on the entry and exit of children in the prison unit; follow-up of the educational paths of children who live in Unit 33 and other provincial prison units; production of teaching guidelines drawn up by DPEI on work with books and readers for all nursery and infant schools in the Province of Buenos Aires, based on the educational experiences developed and conceptualized in "La Ronda"; incorporation of regional technical teams of the Directorate of Continuing Education of the province of Buenos Aires to extend the experience of work in nursery and infant schools near to other prison units.

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Changing Lives in Central America through Access to Information and Literacy

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population 8,098,000 (2013)

Official language Spanish

Poverty
(Population living on less than 2 USD per day):
29.8% (2013)

Total expenditure on education as % of GDP
5.9% (2013)

**Access to primary education –
total net enrolment rate (NIR)**
48.6% (2013)

Youth literacy rate (15–24 years)
Total 97.2% (2015); Men 96.2%; Female 98.1%

Adult literacy rate (15 years and over)
Total 88.5% (2015); Men 88.4%; Female 88.5%

Sources
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PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Changing Lives in Central America through Access
to Information and Literacy

Implementing organization
Riecken Foundation

Language of instruction
Spanish, Garifuna, Lencan, Mangue, Miskito,
Sumo, Mayan Chorti, Tawahka, Creole and English

Funding
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the
American Institutes for Research (AIR) USAID-
MIDEH Project, Riecken's board of directors, SG
Foundation, Peterson Foundation, Strachan
Foundation and local municipalities that provide
librarians' salaries and basic services

Programme partners
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (main
partner) and several other small parners

Annual programme costs
$694,972.

Annual programme cost per learner:
$2, considering all library users

Date of inception 2000

COUNTRY CONTEXT

A large number of people in Latin America declare
themselves unable to read or write, most of them in
the northern triangle of Central America (Guatemala,
Nicaragua and Honduras). Despite this, Honduras can
boast a high literacy rate of 94.98 per cent among
young people, due to formal education programmes
and a total net enrolment rate for primary education
of 94.01 per cent. However, while Honduras has seen

its youth illiteracy rate drop, adult literacy, at 85.36 per cent, is falling behind and the educational and cultural reality is characterized by a large number of people who declare that they cannot read or write.

Another challenge is inequality, which is a feature of Honduran society. For instance, it is projected that universal lower secondary education will be achieved in the 2030s for boys and girls from the richest families but almost 100 years later for the poorest boys and girls. In 2011/12, 84 per cent of the richest but only 10 per cent of the poorest boys and girls completed lower secondary school (EFA GMR, 2014). The low quality of education due to poor systems and outreach to rural communities is a particular issue, resulting in high school drop-out rates and wasted talent.

One approach to tackling the issue of literacy in marginalized communities and reaching out to a wide range of people, rich, poor, young and old, is to develop rich literate environments.

A rich literate environment is a public or private milieu with abundant available materials to motivate people to use their reading and writing skills and thus support their further development.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

Founded in 2000, Riecken's community libraries have succeeded in creating a rich literate environment, by promoting reading and writing practises in 65 different farming communities in Honduras and Guatemala. As there are 53 rural Honduran communities compared to 12 in Guatemala, this case study will focus mainly on Honduras. Over the past decade the communities have embraced their Riecken libraries (named after the organization's founder Susan Riecken) as public places for the enjoyment of reading and writing. Each library contains more than a thousand books, with free internet connection and local democratic governance. Building a literate environment in these places is helping to develop literate and civically active people.

Riecken's approach is to develop modern community libraries with a wider role than more traditional libraries, which are often considered relevant only for

children and formal education. All generations are enthused and encouraged to share their love of books, reading and writing.

The organization aims to establish a broadly recognized network of community libraries, transforming communities into groups of active citizens participating in local and national development initiatives.

The community library promotes access to essential knowledge, the development of critical-thinking skills, and a commitment to lifelong learning and self-education by involving people from all social backgrounds. The idea is to encourage a spirit of discovery, further developing people's ability to try new things, start new projects and participate in the social life of their communities. Reading can be a platform to all those skills as it helps people find solutions to problems or questions and encourages them to be creative.

The libraries offer a variety of reading programmes and literacy courses and engage people from every generation. For example, indigenous elders tell children tales, which are then transcribed and translated into Spanish, to keep alive local traditions and history.

VISION

The Riecken Foundation believes that strong, vibrant community libraries can have a positive impact on democratic development in Honduras. Achieving the desired social and democratic impact is, in part, dependent on three conditions: a highly functioning foundation, with an explicit strategic plan; a capable, well-organized and well-managed staff; and strong outreach and fundraising skills and capacities. If these three conditions are met, the libraries can become part of effective community capacity-building and be educational vehicles that drive informational and technological programming at local levels in ways that increase access and improve computer and other related skills for people of all ages.

Riecken envisions four primary areas of impact: citizen competencies, informational literacy, local development and associative development (Riecken Foundation Strategic Plan 2011–2015). Actions should be taken to achieve both long- and short-term change in these areas.

The organization's work is underpinned by seven principles, which are to be promoted in the programme:

- **Leadership:** Strengthen the ability of children, young people and volunteers to think critically and to promote their own community development, by providing key training and capacity-building to libraries, including training for librarians and board directors.
- **Volunteerism and engagement:** Promote selfless and committed participation by communities so that they take ownership of the development processes.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Foster the capacity for creativity and innovation in the community in order to develop ideas and solutions to their environment's challenges.
- **Respect for human rights:** Believe in a just, ethical and moral society that applies justice using the rule of law.
- **Equity:** All people have an equal opportunity to benefit from Riecken's development programmes and institutional services, regardless of sex, age, religion, political affiliation or socioeconomic status. This is the reason under-represented Mayan languages and bilingual education are supported by the libraries. Free, equal, non-discriminatory access to the Riecken network's programming and resources is guaranteed in order to help reduce the digital divide.
- **Ethics and transparency:** Promote best practise in accountability, integrity, honesty, tolerance and democracy. Community libraries act as model institutions at local level, promoting the principles of open societies.
- **Excellence:** Advocate the implementation and protection of the highest quality of work, striving to become an example and model for others.

The libraries, additionally, focus on:
- Providing access to information and technology through free internet services and open stacks of books available for lending.
- Sparking a spirit of discovery through reading programmes for all ages, including literacy for adults, on the understanding that reading is a powerful vehicle for inspiring curiosity, creativity and innovation.
- Connecting the library with external opportunities and building a network, for funding, relationships and additional training.

- Promoting citizen participation and strengthening the culture of volunteerism and social participation.

## PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES

The libraries have a US-based board of directors, though its president and chief executive are based in Central America, from where they coordinate county directors in Guatemala and Honduras. Riecken's staff (14 in total) in both countries include programme officers, financial officers and a development officer. This team oversees the libraries through coordination with local volunteer boards in each community and regional supervisors. Each library is managed by volunteer community leaders who, in many cases, have developed with the support of the libraries' services and programmes.

Some 109 librarians work in the 65 libraries. Their salaries are paid by local government. There are also around 3,548 volunteers working in the libraries (including 352 who started volunteering in 2013) while the boards of trustees comprise 758 people.

Over the years, Riecken has learned from experience that the key to a successful library is strong community governance. Every Riecken library must begin with a board of volunteer trustees drawn from all sectors of the community. This board must be supported (but not controlled) by local government. Trustees take pride in managing the most honest and most respected institutions in their community. In some villages, the mayor's office has been persuaded to follow the libraries' practise of posting each month's ledger on the wall for inspection by any passerby, known as a 'transparency corner'.

To establish new libraries, the communities themselves must make the initial contact with Riecken. The process of developing a library is as follows:

1. Community contacts the Riecken Foundation with a formal letter.
2. Riecken answers this letter, specifying that the community must: organize a committee with different sectors of the community represented, and ensure there is a legally approved site for the
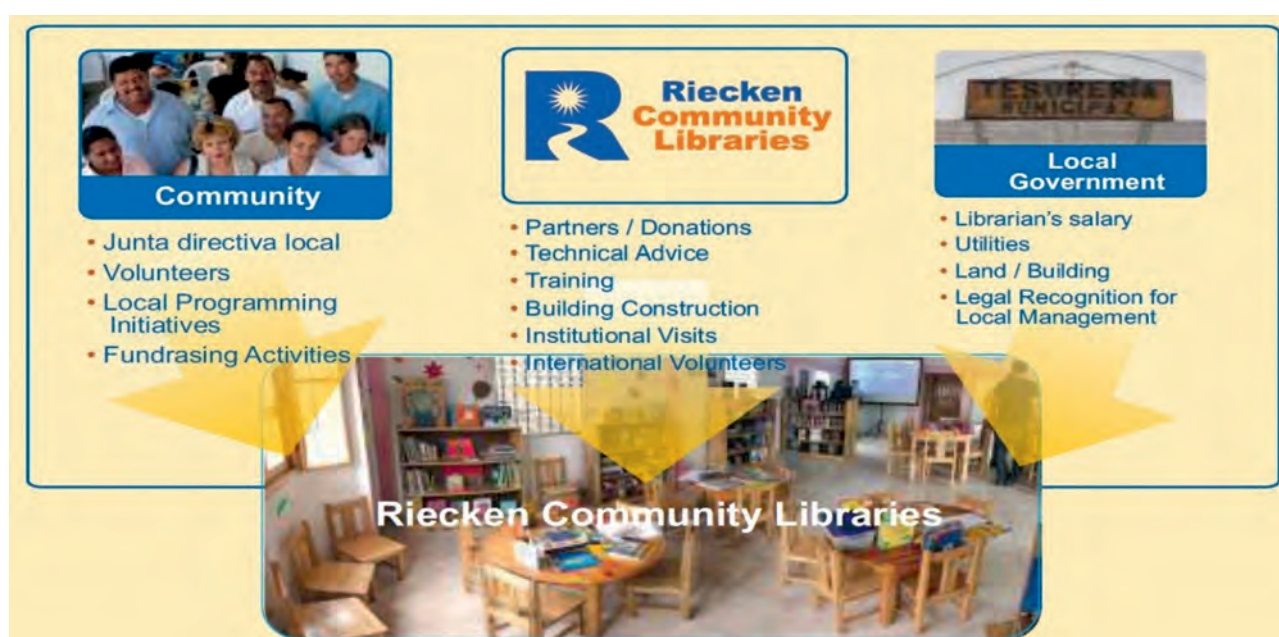
exclusive use of a library, as well as funds to cover a librarian's salary and payment for basic services (water, energy and internet).

3. Riecken organizes a meeting with all interested parties within the community to share information and clarify the requirements.

4. Riecken visits the interested community.

5. If the community satisfies the requirements, Riecken invites a committee to present a proposal to establish the library.

6. Riecken reviews all the proposals it receives and, after a deep analysis, makes a choice.

BENEFICIARIES	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Parents with children aged 0–5	Emergent childhood literacy	Twice each month the families meet in the 'children's corner' of the library to participate in activities focusing on six techniques for cognitive and physical development. The activities are designed so that parents can replicate them at home.
Children under 10	Story hours, the children's reading corner	The reading corner is a space children are encouraged to think of as their own. Dynamic story hours include a pre-story activity or game to break the ice within the group, followed by interactive storytelling and an activity that relates to the story's themes and encourages reflection by the children.
Adolescents ages 10–13	Book clubs	Participants read several chapters of a book during the week, returning to the book club to share their impressions and engage in reflective discussion. Young people and adults discuss different aspects of the content, perhaps referring to an article or other material, thus developing their critical thinking skills.
Youth and adults	Literacy	Although the foundation does not address literacy directly as a programming objective, space is available for youth and adult literacy programmes, and all the resources in the library can be used by reading groups, by mutual agreement with Honduras' National Literacy Programme (EDUCATODOS).

LEARNING APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

People who visit the libraries ask for support on different issues and subjects. Librarians and library directors not only know the main needs of their communities but also keep track of these requests. The libraries are a place to meet and discuss ideas and go beyond rote memorization. Methods vary depending on subjects and the partner institutions providing the workshops or courses, but usually the methodology includes lectures with visual aids, group projects and discussions in which participants share different points of view.

The reading programmes and literacy courses, which involve approximately 25 people, are given throughout the year, from January to November. Depending on the course, it could last from three months to one year. The reading programme provides a stepladder of activities for different ages and reading levels to build motivation for reading:

Every library organizes its reading programmes on a weekly basis. Story hours take place at least twice a week while the early childhood literacy and book clubs occur at least once a week. Libraries coordinate with local schools and other institutions so that they can benefit as many children as possible. Computer courses are also offered in most libraries. The types of courses on offer depend, in part, on opportunities for collaboration and the grants that are available. For instance, there have already been numerous courses on using the internet, social networking and blogs as means to access and exchange information.

An innovative approach used in Riecken's community libraries is 'Bebetecas' (Libraries for babies). Riecken believes that reading to children from an early age (0–5 years), stimulates the mind, develops language and builds a base to ensure the success of reading in the future. Parents are their children's first teachers. They need to be provided with tools and activities to promote their children's reading from an early age and develop a habit that will continue throughout life.

PROGRAMME CONTENT

The curriculum is based on the needs of participants, their knowledge and abilities, and guidance from experts on the different subjects to be covered.

KAQAKAXOOL
nawal del cerro Kaqasiwaan
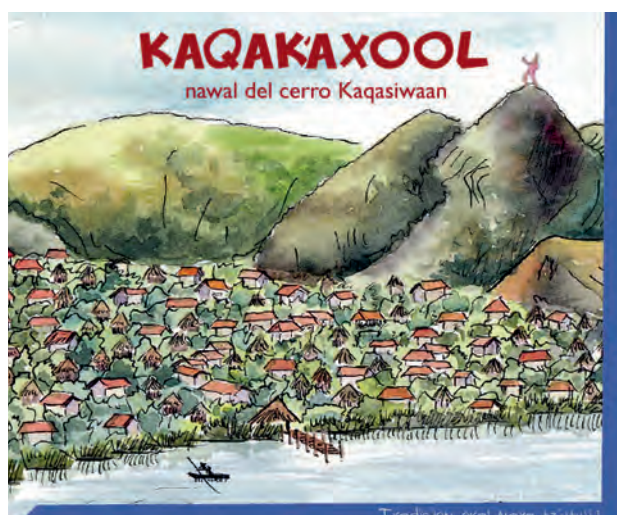
Library staff train teachers and provide them with reading materials so that they can engage their students in reading activities. Other topics covered include environmental conservation, cultural traditions, nutrition, digital inclusion, health, economic development, youth development, enthusiasm for reading, stimulating voluntarism, social inclusion and identity. Every library generates different initiatives and topics according to their contexts.

TEACHING MATERIAL AND FACILITIES

Each library offers free access to information through book collections, computers and internet.

The libraries also use audiovisual material, educational software, and printed materials for courses or workshops, and have published bilingual books (in indigenous languages and Spanish) to be used in story hours and book clubs activities. In Central America, bilingual textbooks and research materials are virtually unknown in schools and the Riecken libraries try to fill this void.

The bilingual books are developed through a communitarian process. This starts with community elders relating oral traditions in their local Mayan language to children at the library. These stories are recorded,

transcribed and translated into Spanish by librarians and volunteers. Illustrations are made by young local artists. Riecken has partnered with a publishing house to guide the structuring of the stories and the illustration process through workshops and seminars.

Most of the libraries also have a teacher's corner where local teachers participate in discussions about education quality and workshops to improve their creativity in the classroom.

TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT OF FACILITATORS

In some cases, facilitators are trained by partnering institutions. For instance, facilitators for the nutrition component of the reading programmes were trained for free by the Institute for Nutrition in Central America and Panama. Riecken also conducts two or three training sessions for librarians each year to strengthen their abilities to deliver the reading programmes. In 2013, all 109 librarians and 301 volunteers were trained in leadership, advocacy, technology or reading for pleasure.

Riecken never uses money as an incentive. People give their time freely because they value the activity. They get the opportunity for personal exchange among libraries and to attend annual meetings with a representative of the volunteers, as well as receiving small gifts such as t-shirts and cups with the Riecken logo. The economic value of the volunteers is estimated to be $613,095 per year (on the basis of a minimum wage of $1.2 per hour and an average of three hours of work each week per person).

OUTREACH TO LEARNERS AND USERS

As a central literate environment, located within the community, the libraries naturally attract a lot of people and, through word of mouth, reach even more. It is expected that the translation of Mayan tales will encourage more indigenous people to become an active part in the life of the libraries. Riecken also runs technology programmes that, for example, train youth groups to replicate what they learn with other groups, thus multiplying knowledge and community impact.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Communication by phone or email, and community visits, are regularly undertaken by Riecken to discuss

the progress of each library in terms of the different programmes, activities, collaborations, beneficiaries and sustainability issues. During the visits, volunteers and local officials share their needs and ideas to develop solutions and to source local and international opportunities for support. Riecken internally performs regular health checks of all 65 network libraries, in order to evaluate the management, administrative and programmatic strengths of each library and the network as a whole.

After training, each participant fills out a post-training/programme evaluation form. These forms will be distributed after any Riecken-sponsored training or workshop to assess the quality and utility of the activity, and which aspects of the activity can be improved in the future.

- **Equity:**
  55% of users are female
  45% of users are male
- **Technology and information access**:
  53% of users read
  33% of users use computers
- **Quality education:**
  73% of users do homework
  79% of users are students

	2007	2012
Attendance by gender: female	52%	56%
Attendance by gender: male	48%	44%
Almost daily library users	37%	25%
Users who do homework at the library	70%	66%
Users who who come to use computers	45%	36%
Students using the library	73%	76%
Primary school students	37%	38%
Monthly incomes below $100	42%	44%

In 2012, Riecken contracted the services of an outside consulting firm to help establish permanent short-, mid-, and long-term monitoring and evaluation tools. The purpose of the planning, monitoring and evaluation system (PMandE) developed for the Riecken Foundation is to enhance Riecken's capacity to collect, analyse and learn from data about its own capacity and programmes as well as about the capacity and programmes of the community libraries that it seeks to strengthen.

IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

An independent Fulbright impact study of the libraries was conducted in 2007 and updated in 2012, using the following participatory processes:

a. Surveys conducted in 40 libraries: nine in Guatemala and 31 in Honduras, a sample of 63 per cent of Riecken libraries, with more than 9,000 users participating.
b. Focus groups with library managers and foundation staff.
c. Perception interviews among library users, volunteers, librarians, members of civil society, and local organizations.

The study's conclusion's affirmed two main hypotheses:

1. Riecken libraries have introduced a new and inclusive model of community libraries in the rural communities of Guatemala and Honduras.
2. Access to information and interaction with local citizens favours the generation of so-cial capital among library users and library staff.

A striking finding was the increase in reading and the decline in television viewing. Children in library communities also spend more time doing homework. Many respondents shared how young people went on to new sources of employment and education, motivated by the library resources and by the impacts of programmes and courses.

- The libraries attract around 620,000 visitors a year and 50,000 each month, which is approximately 800 per library. Of these, 39 per cent are children, 38 per cent young people and 23 per cent adults, with a gender ratio of 54 per cent female to 46 per cent male.

- They provide a safe, healthy, and trustworthy environment, which is valued by the different communities.
- Children come to the library to listen to story hours. Mothers bring their children for early childhood development programmes. Teenagers who have been involved in childhood activities still come to the library to do research or participate in leadership programmes, reducing school drop-out rates and strengthening their abilities.
- The libraries have sponsored youth service groups, nutrition seminars, community radio programming, regional chess tournaments, early childhood development pro-grammes, adult literacy courses and agricultural cooperatives, all of which increased the hunger for knowledge within the community and stirred excitement about the possibilities for self-development.
- Riecken libraries are the first institutions in Guatemala to welcome and accommodate both Mayan and Spanish speakers and readers.
- Honduras is trying to revive its Mayan culture and identity, a process Riecken supports by trying to promote literacy in the Mayan-Chorti villages of the Copan Ruinas through bookmobiles.
- Endangered Mayan languages are recovered through the publication of books relating village histories in their ancestral languages. Communities are proud to share their cultural heritage and to see it acknowledged for the first time in books. The process also contributes to the education of these communities' children.
- The practise of reading aloud, and the training to support it, helps children to develop a positive relationship with reading from an early age. For teenagers and adults, book clubs have been formed to promote reading as a social activity and a source of enjoyment and camaraderie. The book clubs are purely voluntary – remarkable in a society where, according to UNESCO, less than 1 per cent of the population maintains a habit of reading.
- The libraries provide access to information to the poorest part of the population, of whom 61 per cent live on incomes of less than $100 per month, 26 per cent live in homes with dirt floors, and 28 per cent have fewer than six books at home.
- They constitute a volunteer movement with a high level of knowledge built around the operation of libraries.

■ Some further positive impacts on users: teachers changed their teaching from rote learning to research-oriented learning; farmers developed internet coffee sales; the fiscal honesty demonstrated by the libraries has been emulated by mayors; and the idea has inspired others to start prison reading groups (a local exercise of Chiché Library in Guatemala).

IMPROVEMENTS IN LITERACY SKILLS

The libraries transformed perceptions of reading, viewed by many as an unpleasant activity, to generate a reading habit based on a love for books and stories. Nowadays, children come voluntarily to the children's corner in the libraries to hear a story hour and to pick up books to read. These story hours are also given in the communities' local Mayan language, another way in which the libraries help to promote intercultural bilingual education.

TESTIMONIALS

Eva Rodezno (Santa Cruz de Yojoa, Cortés), volunteer: *'In my volunteer work I would most emphasize the pleasure of being able to serve others. There is also the recognition and credibility that we have earned as a board, both among other institutions and among the general population. And I've been learning more and more every day from our users.'*

Iris Yamileth Hernández (New Vision Library Guacamaya, El Progreso, Yoro), librarian: *'When I was a child (...) unfortunately I could not continue my studies for lack of economic resources. I would have loved to study business administration. I was part of the support committee of the library. When it came time to choose a librarian I never thought they would recruit me, since I have no higher education. I remember that someone on the board said that I was not prepared for the job. Those words hurt, but he was right; I was not prepared for anything like that. The other board members said I should accept the post, that the Riecken Foundation would provide my training; and those words encouraged me to accept this position. The first few days were crazy, taking questions from users who were thrilled to have a library with so many free services. I learn a lot from the people who visit us. The books have been a real treasure for me, and through them I gained a lot of knowledge. Being in the library has let me know different places and people and to make new friends.'*

Margarita Escoto (San Luis, Comayagua), parent: *'My daughter participated in Zone X (a youth book club), where she learned to act as a leader. Now that she is in college, she says that what she learned in Zone X has helped her a lot in her classes. You feel secure speaking in public and you can handle the computer well from computer skills learned in the library.'*

Miguel Paz Barahona (Veneranda Maradiaga), school director: '*Reading stories not only supports my Spanish lessons but also during recess, since children enjoy this free time reading.*'

11-year-old user (San Francisco Cones, Ocotepeque): '*In the library I learned to read faster and say the words better. My family says that the library is a big help.*'

Rosalinda Tay (San Juan La Laguna, Guatemala), adult user: '*I go to the library whenever I have time. I feel welcome and get help whenever I need it. For example, a customer asked me for photos of my hats, which I did not have. Then I took some hats to the library and asked for help. When they took the photos I sent them by email to my customer, as before I had already learned in the library how to send emails.*'

CHALLENGES

- Advocacy with central and local governments, as well as with local and international institutions, to strengthen Riecken's network of libraries so that they can fulfil the communities' demands and needs, is a constant challenge.
- Central governments do not provide support for community libraries, neither through the Ministry of Education nor the Ministry of Culture. Although all of the local governments provide the salaries of at least one librarian and pay for basic services, such as electricity and water, it is a persistent challenge to continue this support whenever there is a change of administration.
- There is a perceived degree of job instability among librarians, as well as dissatisfaction with low wages, and, in some cases, noncompliance with minimum labour rights by the municipal government.
- Very few municipalities contribute to other important services that the library model offers, specifically internet fees.
- In most Riecken community libraries there is high demand for services and programmes, meaning that the library space, resources and staff are sometimes insufficient to accommodate them all.
- The 2012 study found that libraries have out-of-date collections which should be up-dated.
- Strengthening outreach activities is another challenge. Bookmobiles (vehicles designed for use as a

library) have the potential to expand services and to reach non-users and adults.

LESSONS LEARNED

- According to the Riecken model, the library boards are responsible for advocacy to new municipal governments. Sometimes, however, the political affiliations of library board members can be counterproductive. It was recommended that volunteers and librarians be trained so as to achieve the formalization of local public policies favourable to librarians. There is always a danger that external factors will affect librarians' job security, which is why libraries need to secure their reputation among other local organizations to ensure permanent and apolitical support for operating expenses.
- Some new librarians have been hired without training. Although the Riecken Foundation has reactivated its library management workshops, it has been suggested that it should create a decentralized programme of librarian peer exchange, as it is difficult to maintain a centralized training strategy.
- To make community libraries successful meeting points for all kinds of people, it is important that they directly address the needs of a range of beneficiaries. Local government, teachers, local organizations and the wider community must also be engaged if the project is to be sustainable.

SUSTAINABILITY

Before a new library can be established, local agreements between Riecken, local government and the community are signed to ensure sustainability. Local governments agree to cover the librarians' salaries and services, while the communities form a volunteer board that oversees its management and seeks outside partnerships. Riecken provides all initial construction, books, technology and equipment. Many library board members are local teachers. The foundation also supports the network by providing training to librarians, board members and volunteers, as well as by seeking external partners to sustain the work in the communities. Libraries make partnerships with local schools and health centres, among others, by offering space to hold development activities to benefit communities. Since 2000, the Riecken community libraries network

and model has grown to 65 community libraries across Guatemala and Honduras.

The model has been replicated by several organizations that have come to Riecken for guidance in implementing it in the communities they serve. In Guatemala, the USAID classroom reform programme has, with Riecken's guidance, replicated the model in 12 different communities in two years. In Honduras, Riecken participated in an educational project financed by AIR/USAID, 'Reading takes you far!'. The USAID-funded Improving Student Achievement Project (MIDEH 2011–2016), implemented by the American Institutes for Research, aimed to support community library reading programmes in Honduras in order to strengthen primary school students' ability to meet national standards in Spanish, improve reading skills for first- to sixth-grade students, and improve community capacity to monitor education and advocate for educational quality. The Inter-American Development Bank has shown interest in replicating the model in other Central American countries.

External partners have approached Riecken to continue funding its cost-effective and easily replicable community library model by expanding the existing network in Central America and other countries. The Riecken Foundation has also been invited to join the steering committee of the Beyond Access Campaign, a global programme developed to advocate for the contribution of public libraries to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. For the time being, Riecken's focus is on strengthening the current library network in Honduras and Guatemala, rather than on building new libraries.

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Bibliobús Bertolt Brecht and the German-Nicaraguan Library

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population
5,742,800 (2009)
Official languages Spanish
(recognized languages: Miskito, Nicaraguan
Creole, Rama, Sumo-Mayangna, Garifuna)
Poverty
(Population living on less than USD 1.25 per day)
15.8% (2005)
Total expenditure on education as % of GNP
3.1% (2002)
Total youth literacy rate (15–24 years)
87% (2005)
Adult literacy rate (15 years and over, 2005)
Total: 78%; Male: 78.1%; Female: 77.9%

Sources
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■ UNICEF: Information by country
■ World Bank: World Development Indicators
database

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Bibliobús Bertolt Brecht and the
German-Nicaraguan Library
Implementing organization
Pan y Arte e.V. (Germany)

Date of inception
1987

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

As the second poorest country in Latin America, Nicaragua struggles against a low development rate. With political strife having disrupted the basic education of many adults and in the light of a significant school drop-out rate for children, there are still many Nicaraguans who are illiterate or have low levels of literacy. Less than 50 per cent of children who started in the first grade of primary school manage to reach the final grade (UIS, 2007) and only 80 per cent of chil-

dren of primary school age attend classes (UNICEF, 2003–2008). A high rate of unemployment can be found across the country and around 27 per cent of Nicaraguan prisoners are between the ages of 15 and 18. In spite of the large share of young inmates, the prisons find it difficult to pay for medical or psychological care for the prisoners and, under such circumstances, funds for training and education are virtually non-existent.

In the 1980s, a successful literacy campaign was launched by the Nicaraguan government which mobilized high school and university students as well as teachers from all levels of education to deliver literacy classes across the country over a period of five months. The results of this initial campaign earned Nicaragua the UNESCO Nadezka Kruskaya Prize for Literacy in 1980. A change of government in 1990 led to the dismantling of the former literacy programme and, though new institutions and projects were established, illiteracy rates in the 1990s showed only marginal improvement in comparison to 1970. The 'Yo Sí Puedo' programme, which began in Nicaragua in 2005, has since given renewed momentum to the challenge of tackling illiteracy and can be said to have made significant headway. However, the receding levels of literacy after the first campaign reinforce the importance of establishing literacy sustaining environments which endure regardless of the scope of government policies and inspire and enable those who have participated in literacy programmes to continue learning. The Bibliobús project began in 1984 when the retired German librarian, Elisabeth Zilz, visited Nicaragua for the first time. Following the powerful impression the country and its people left on her, she returned to Germany with the intention of supporting Nicaragua. Seeking a way to express her solidarity, she set upon acquiring financial assistance to create a new mobile library service and, subsequently, a permanent German-Nicaraguan Library. There had been a prede-

cessor to the mobile library, the vehicle 'Simón Bolívar', donated by the government of Venezuela in 1981 as a gesture of solidarity to the people of Nicaragua. Unfortunately though, this vehicle had to be decommissioned in 1986 when important parts could not be replaced.

The mobile library set up by Elizabeth Zilz and her supporters, Bibliobús Bertolt Brecht, has now been in service since 1987 and the public library, Biblioteca Alemana-Nicaragüense, has been open since 1993. The entire programme was taken over by the German NGO, Pan y Arte e.V., in 2009 following the retirement of the Ms. Zilz. Pan y Arte e.V. was established in Weikersheim, Germany, in 1994 and has the mandate to help disadvantaged people in Nicaragua through the means of education, art and culture, thereby fostering greater cultural understanding.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims of the two projects (the mobile library and the German-Nicaraguan Library) are as follows:

- Strengthen and reinforce basic education and replace the services of the former mobile library.
- Cultivate and nurture an enjoyment of reading among the children, young people and adults of Nicaragua.

- Provide access to information on national and international literature for children, schoolchildren and all of the library's visitors who are interesting in gaining knowledge on these topics.
- Support schoolchildren from primary and secondary education with their homework and research.
- Give prisoners the opportunity to develop their skills on a professional and a personal level.
- Support the democratization process of the people.
- Create an environment (and more specifically, a building) for cultural exchange with national and international institutions (speeches, talks, meetings, courses, etc.). In practise, this objective is met by means of offering cultural and educational services for the community (e.g. self-defence workshops, concert and theatre venue, school holiday activity programmes).

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The first steps towards establishing the mobile library service were made in Germany, where Elizabeth Zilz collected donations, gave presentations, set up advertisements, introduced the project at the Frankfurt Book Fair and earned support from publishers, artists, writers, priests and many other interested members of the public. Through these channels of support, she collected enough money to buy a bus in the former German Democratic Republic and around 3,000 books

in Spanish. In order to strengthen the books for library usage, she established the bookbinding workshop 'Sophie Scholl' in Managua, Nicaragua, which remains in operation today.

Following the generosity of several mechanics, who offered their skills free of charge to transform the bus into a mobile library, the Bibliobús Bertolt Brecht came into service in 1987. On account of the previous mobile library, Simón Bolívar, having run into disrepair, the new vehicle was equipped with a tool box and replacement parts.

Since being introduced, the mobile library has visited a variety of villages, schools, factories and institutions. At present, it travels once a month to the three prisons, Chinandega, Granada and Matagalpa (each with around 800 prisoners), and every fortnight to the women's prison 'La Esperanza' in Managua. Contracts were drawn up between the individual prisons and the Bibliobús in order to regulate the visits and ensure that the prisons would support the bus project in case of the loss of books, with the presence of wardens during visits, by ensuring direct access to the books for the prisoners and with financial aid by subsidising fuel costs. After negotiation with the prisons, direct access for the prisoners to select books was successfully obtained in all of the institutions. In some of the rural

prisons, the wardens change every five years and the contract with the Bibliobús is signed on a yearly basis.

The Bibliobús forms a significant opportunity for prisoners to develop their skills and characters during their time behind bars. The inmates often receive advice from the librarian and materials, such as paint or paper, are occasionally brought to support any skills which the prisoners may develop and wish to pursue. Inmates can be given the privilege of borrowing three books per month if a volunteer from the Bibliobús notices that he or she has a high level of academic ability. Literature workshops were offered in the prisons in 2009 and 2010 in order to give the participants the chance to exchange information about what they have read and receive more information about authors and literature. On a more fundamental level, many of the inmates first learn to read and write whilst in prison. The Bibliobús supports their basic literary needs with a selection of children's books and easy reading material.

A special selection of literature is available for the women's prison in order to make it easier for them to re-integrate in society. Following the women's interest in the books on religion, drawing, sewing, dancing, typing, etc., the literature has been complemented by visits from external prison staff who are qualified to offer guidance and train the women (to differing levels) in these areas.

To reach the wider community, the Bibliobús travels to schools in rural areas, at least one of which it has now served for over 20 years. Before commencing the service, agreements are drawn up with the school to define how often the Bibliobús should visit, what

kind of books should be provided, what happens if a book goes missing, etc. Both teachers and pupils are provided with access to reading material which can support their formal education and compensate for the lack of books available in the classroom and home environments. Every year, International Book Day is celebrated in and around the bus where the children can spend the day reading and listening to storytellers. A list of the books out on loan is prepared during every Bibliobús visit and a copy remains on site, be it at a school or a prison, to ensure that the person in charge can collect and order the books before the next visit. The books are usually borrowed for a month by the users.

THE GERMAN-NICARAGUAN LIBRARY

In 1993, the Biblioteca Alemana-Nicaragüense (German-Nicaraguan Library) was established as a public library in Managua which, aside from its variety of library functions, houses the Bibliobús and serves as an area to store the books. The library was situated in the premises of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation until 2001 when the city of Managua donated 1000m² of territory in Linda Vista Norte, on which the new library building could be constructed. Further extension was carried out in 2005 and the building now covers 463m², consisting of a large reading room, a children's area, a small auditorium and space and tables for 65 visitors.

Almost exceeding its capacities, the library houses over 14,000 books, of which 14 per cent are school books, 33 per cent are national and international literature, 15 per cent are children's and young adult books and 38 per cent are non-fiction. Part of the collection consists of 700 titles from German literature translated into Spanish ranging from books on philosophy, psychology and religion to history, biographies and young adult literature. Nowadays, the books are obtained both in Nicaragua and abroad. Many titles are donated by exhibitors and participants of the annual Frankfurt Book Fair in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

In addition to the library services offered, many cultural activities take place in the library such as concerts, book readings and author events, exhibitions, film showings and workshops. The variety and regularity of events have established the library as a cultural centre which actively promotes cultural exchange. The

library supports many other initiatives (often offering its auditorium for cultural use) and works in harmony with a range of institutions and NGOs.

Pan y Arte has contributed to the project since 2002 and when Elizabeth Zilz retired seven years later, Pan y Arte became the German organization responsible for the Biblíobus Bertolt Brecht and the German-Nicaraguan Library, alongside coordinating additional social and cultural projects in Nicaragua.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT AND TRAINING

A team of 10 people work in the library, including the director, the cleaning staff, the librarian, the librarian's assistant, the children's area assistant, an employee to help with lending books and often a young volunteer from Germany. With the exception of the volunteers, the posts are remunerated. The children's area assistant is responsible for helping children to develop their reading skills in both the library and the nearby schools and attends workshops, particularly on the topics of reading aloud, craftwork, etc.

The tasks involved in this position require creativity, enjoyment in reading, the ability to read in an entertaining manner and, where possible, some pedagogical training. The librarian, who has a long experience working in libraries, is currently studying for a degree in information management and routinely participates in training workshops on library management offered by the National Library and the National Association of Librarians. Representatives from the organization Libros para niños which plays an important role in encouraging children to read in Central America, come to the library regularly to work with the library employees as part of a cooperation between both organizations.

The first driver of the Bibliobús, Reybil Cuaresma Bustos, initially performed the tasks of the librarian and continues to drive the Bibliobús to this day. Over the years, his loyalty, commitment and know-how have enabled many Nicaraguans to have direct and meaningful contact to reading material and to cultivate reading habits which will accompany them for life. Each time the Bibliobús sets out, either the librarian or her assistant accompany the driver in order to help with the book lending and collection, and to advise and support the readers.

In 2001, the library started to offer unpaid work placements for young Germans who wish to spend six to 12 months living and working in Nicaragua. The volunteers help with manual tasks but, most importantly, contribute to enhancing the role of the library as a cultural and educational centre for the community. It is common for them to offer English or German classes and give music, juggling or chess lessons but they are encouraged to set up their own initiatives based on their talents and interests.

IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

One of the most profoundly successful parts of the programme has undoubtedly concerned the interaction with prisoners and the provision of opportunities for them to access literature. With over 6,500 books borrowed by inmates from four prisons in 2009, it is clear that many prisoners take advantage of the opportunity to borrow books from the Bibliobús. In addition to children's books being read by those with low levels of literacy, non-fiction books are in high demand from prisoners who want to acquire practical skills and further their personal development. Literature not only offers them a chance to escape the tough and monotonous life in prison but allows them to acquire knowledge which will be useful when they are released.

Cooperative relations between the prison employees and the Bibliobús volunteers have enabled the programme to work well and have such a positive effect on the prisoners. On leaving prison, one of the inmates from Chinandega prison received a grant from a German sponsor to finance his apprenticeship for a few years. However, there are many more accounts of the positive impact that the library service has had on prisoners:

Luis Francisco Arauz: '*When I first came to prison 11 years ago, I believed that my life had been destroyed. Then, I began to read books through the Bibliobús. One day I found a book called "The Joy of Painting" which contained so many beautiful things that I decided to start painting. With what I have learned, I can earn a living as a sign painter. Nowadays, thanks to my painting, the community recognizes and appreciates me and*

I have become a different person. My teacher was the Bibliobús.'

On arriving at the rural schools, the mobile library is always greeted by a crowd of children, pupils and young adults. In light of the considerable number of pupils who do not manage to complete their entire primary education, the mobile library creates an incentive to attend school and the arrival of the bus is announced through a loudspeaker to inform the community. The reading skills that pupils develop by loaning books remains with them throughout their lives and goes some way to counteract the negative effects of a stunted primary education.

The staff of the mobile library were able to witness how the children's experience fostered enjoyment in reading and helped them to achieve success. Though it was challenging to follow the progress of the children once they left primary school, concrete results can be seen. One girl who used the Bibliobús service at school has now gone on to study medicine and stated that without the library service she would have very likely not done so. In the village of Los Cerros, the secondary school children insisted that they too be given access to the library service which was previously only offered to the children of primary age. The teenagers request

young adult books, from the Latin American classics to modern international literature such as Harry Potter and the Twilight saga and there is one very talented young artist who borrows books on Leonardo DaVinci and drawing techniques.

Used by about 20,000 people every year and with about 100 to 150 children and young adults visiting every day to do their homework, read and play, the library forms a cultural hub for the community. The assistants support pupils with their homework and from time to time the institution provides children with school bags, paper and school books to make it easier for them to attend school. The majority of visitors are pupils who live nearby and come to do their homework but university students and adults visit regularly too. On the national level, the library supports international cultural exchange by hosting lectures, discussions, internships and various projects with foreign guests. This level of active, public library culture was largely unknown and proving revaitalizing in Nicaragua.

Following the literacy campaign of the 1980s, the visits of the Bibliobús to factories and rural villages made it easier for those who had improved their reading skills to continue developing, as well as giving people an

incentive to learn more. Through the Bibliobús visits and the creation of the library, advancements have been made to overcome the scarcity of literature and create literacy sustaining and promoting environments which support both children's formal education and lifelong learning in the community.

CHALLENGES

Aside from the acquisition of donations, the challenges that arose in the progression of this project were mainly practical and political. An area which could have presented a number of hurdles was working with the prisons, particularly the question of allowing the mobile library on site and offering prisoners unrestricted access to the books. Despite the potential difficulties, the establishment of contracts and the cooperation of the prison staff have resulted in productive teamwork.

One of the first challenges to the programme was the theft of bus parts which has taken place in times of transition (whilst the bus was held in customs in 1987 and during the move to the National Library in 1992). Unfortunately, there are very few ways to prevent such difficulties occurring but luckily such events are rare.

At the beginning of the programme, it was not made sufficiently clear that the books from the Bibliobús were on loan and many believed they were gifts which did not need to be returned. People saw the writing on the bus, 'Friends from the Federal Republic in solidarity with the Nicaraguan people', and wrongly believed that the books were donations. Without clarity over the nature of the programme, this could have led to more restrictive running of the project over the long term. Moreover, it took significant effort on the part of the workers to have these books returned.

Due to political and administrative reorganization carried out by public authorities during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the project was handed over to the Ministry for Culture. During this period, the vehicle was out of service for six months while it was being used to transport staple food to workers. On realizing that the bus was not fulfilling the aims of the project, the employees behind the service searched for a better solution. In March 1990, the bus was finally placed in the hands of the mayor's office in Managua and returned to the local library, Elvis Chavarría, from where it resumed its visits to work centres and prisons. Meeting these challenges has only been possible thanks to strong leadership and determination from

the implementing organization (originally Elizabeth Zilz and the charity Ein Bücherbus für Nicaragua e.V., subsequently Pan y Arte e.V.).

LESSONS LEARNED

The Bibliobús and the German-Nicaraguan Library serve as best practise examples of cooperative librarianship and the creation of active reading centres in a country where reading habits are under-developed and libraries are under-resourced or simply non-existent. The German-Nicaraguan Library demonstrates that libraries can be more than a simple collection of books by offering active cultural programmes and reaching out to disadvantaged communities.

Two important factors which have contributed to the success of the programme are the continuity and regularity of the visits and the motivation and flexibility of the volunteers to continuously improve and extend the service.

The enlightening results from the active participation of prisoners have shown that functional literacy skills can help to improve quality of life for people with a variety of backgrounds and that making reading material available corresponds to providing people with tools to help themselves.

The experience of the Bibliobús in the village schools and throughout the community has served to foster good reading habits in both children and adults, and to encourage children to discover the enjoyment of reading and learning.

The continuing success of the mobile library project has been dependent on external support by way of NGOs and charity organizations working in a supervisory capacity. Nonetheless, since becoming stationed at the German-Nicaraguan Library, the vehicle has functioned exclusively as a mobile library and the monitoring of its activity is no longer such a challenging task.

SUSTAINABILITY

Under the management of Pan y Arte, both the Bibliobús and the German-Nicaraguan Library receive charitable representation outside of Nicaragua and regular financial support from foreign donors. The promotion of the programme in Germany and at book fairs across the world has sufficed to ensure that the library regularly receives new titles and funds to expand its resources and area of service. The library has been repeatedly extended and rebuilt to accommodate higher numbers of visitors and in 2009 a computer was purchased for the Bibliobús as a result of continuing financial support. In 2011, a new Bibliobús was acquired which will eventually be equipped with a solar battery to power an on-board computer and an overhead projector for film screenings.

One of the significant reasons for the sustainability of the programme has been the active and growing participation of the community and the support from the prison staff. Organizations working in the country put forward new locations in their area and agree to fund the visits of the mobile library to these areas. This input from external organizations allows the library to continue having a wide impact and contributes to the financial stability of the project. The work placement programme for young Germans increases the manpower in the library and injects vitality to the programme given that every new volunteer brings different talents to offer to the community. Volunteers are encouraged to create their own initiatives such as chess competitions, self-defence courses, etc, which actively involve and educate the community.

The library directly addresses the educational needs of the people, providing them with the tools they require to continue learning, and remains innovatively led with a growing collection of titles and changing cultural events (courses, talks, art workshops, etc.). Meeting the demand of the community and remaining flexible plays a large role in the survival of the Bibliobús and the library. As long as the partners (schools, communities and prison staff) and the programme organizers remain on such good terms of negotiation and cooperation, the Bibliobús should be able to continue to offer a fruitful and valuable library service to the inmates.

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Prison Education Programmes for Young People and Adults

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population
3,344,938 (2009)

Official language
Spanish

Adult literacy rate
(15 years and over, 1995–2004)
Total: 98.2% (2008);
Male: 97.8%; Female: 98.5%

Total expenditure on education as % of GNP
2.8% (2006)

Total youth literacy rate (15–24 years)
99% (2008)

Sources

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PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme title
Prison Education Programmes for Young People and Adults

Language of instruction
Spanish

Implementing organization
Administración Nacional de Educación Pública y su Consejo Directivo Central (ANEP – CODICEN)
National Authorities for Public Education and Central Governing Council

Funding
National government, NGOs

Date of inception
2005

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The number of imprisoned people and the length of prison sentences in Uruguay has sharply increased since 1995 following a national crackdown on crime. Problems of overcrowding in some prisons and the general lack of resources and funding have been exacerbated after the annual rate of imprisoned people per 100,000 inhabitants doubled from 110 to 220 between 1995 and 2005 . A demographic look at Uruguay's prison population reveals that more than 60 per cent of imprisoned people are under 30 years old and many have received little or inadequate schooling. A study was commissioned in 2007 to investigate the education levels of people deprived of their liberty across Uruguay. Some 5,781 individuals were interviewed across the country, which represents over 80 per cent of Uruguay's total prison population. The results revealed that 40 per cent of prisoners had not completed their primary education and 31 per cent had only completed their primary education and then left the formal education system.

Difficult economic circumstances in 2002 left Uruguay with a high poverty incidence rates and led the way to the formation of a National Social Emergency Plan, which was set up in 2005 in the wake of a change of government. The Ministry for Social Development was created in that same year with the objective of bringing the plan forward and formulating, executing, supervising and evaluating policies and strategies in the fields of youth, women and the family, the elderly, the disabled and social development.

To address the educational needs of the section of the population previously excluded from their basic education, the Ministry of Education and Culture (Ministerio de Educación y Cultura) and the National Administration of Public Education (Administración Nacional de Educación Pública) jointly undertook an initiative to conduct educational projects inside prison institutions on a variety of topics and with many

different objectives (health, family life, vocational training, literacy skills, social reintegration, etc.).

Following the introduction of the Humanisation of the Penitentiary System Act (Nº 17,897) in 2005, which placed significant emphasis on the benefits of education in prison environments, the scope of education in prisons began to find a stronger source of support and subsequently started to enlarge. Since being established in 2007, the Support Commission for Education in Prisons has been committed to achieving wider and better quality educational coverage in prisons across the country, by means of workshops, courses and literacy programmes for the imprisoned people.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

One of the fundamental objectives of the penitentiary system is to work towards the rehabilitation and eventual reinsertion into society of people who are imprisoned. Under the scope of these aims, prison education functions as a means to improve the conditions of imprisonment and represents the stage prior to active rehabilitation. As part of the overarching national Education Programme for Young People and Adults, educational programmes and activities were established in prisons to achieve the following aims:

- Strengthen the links and intensify engagement with organizations and institutions connected to the prison population in order to coordinate activities and avoid overlapping or negatively affecting existing efforts.
- Extend educational coverage to every prison in the country.
- Promote the provision of training for prison staff, particularly those connected either directly or

indirectly to teaching in the establishments.
- Develop and implement a distinctive training programme for teachers working in prisons to empower them to face the particular characteristics of the prison population and their environment.
- Make sure that education in prisons promotes self-reliance and autonomy with the end objective of enabling the prison population to reintegrate into society harmoniously.
- Investigate how the activities which are offered can be improved and optimized by means of a survey of prisoners.
- Construct an area to support the introduction and implementation of Humanisation of the Penitentiary System Act, which allows sentences to be reduced in exchange for studying.

PROGRAMME COORDINATION

As the prison education system in Uruguay is made up of a variety of projects run by private organizations and public authorities, coordination is of key importance and is carried out by the Support Commission for Prison Education. The Commission comprises of members of the Ministry for Education and Culture, the Department of Education and Further Education in the National Office for Prisons and Rehabilitation Centres and in the National Trust for Current and Released Prisoners, the Parliamentary Commissioner, the National Administration of Public Education and an advisor with pedagogical experience specifically in prison education and who is appointed by the committee members.

The Commission is charged with the task of analysing the policies and educational practises in prisons, coordinating actions to improve education methods and conditions, supporting the training of prison staff, particularly those with direct or indirect teaching role, coordinating the links between public and private institutions in order to achieve maximum educational coverage across the country, and maintaining contact with regional and international organizations with similar objectives. Rather than a passive, administrative role, the Commission actively engages with all those involved (teachers, imprisoned people and prison staff). Such interaction has brought to light the hidden reality of life behind bars while exposing new topics and concerns for discussion in the area of education and society.

METHODOLOGIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

Non-formal education in the prisons utilizes both formal and non-formal teaching approaches, with possibilities to attend literacy classes, continue with primary or secondary education, access vocational training and take part in workshops, theatre groups, and so on. Activities are planned and carried out with the intention of supporting the development of skills, encouraging group communication and reforming the outlook and social behaviour of the imprisoned people.

The chess project carried out in 2007, 'El ajedrez de las cárceles', provides an example of the common interdisciplinary nature of the prison programmes. The integrated structure of the course encompassed three themed workshops on carpentry (building the chess board), ICT (installing a computer chess game) and journalism (reporting on a chess tournament) to develop various tasks through the development of literacy and practical skills.

In that same year, a pilot project was developed by a team of education professionals and introduced in the men's prison of the city of Canelones. After consulting a selection of prisoners on their interests and preferences for the workshop, Uruguayan Carnival was adopted as the central theme. On preparing the sessions, literacy and self-directed learning were woven carefully into the curriculum by the team of professionals. The aspects addressed during the workshop were the social self and environment, language development and communication, art and culture (music groups and carnival), history and geographical reviews of similar cultural expressions. The workshop participants were encouraged to deal with standard aspects of life as well as their own experiences, writing and speaking about the reality of their situations and the topics of freedom, hope and time. During the workshops, the participants developed their reading, writing and general communication skills through the embedded literacy components in the programme.

Despite having been planned for only 20 participants, by the third meeting 27 prospective learners had joined the workshop and, in order to guarantee the educational quality of the sessions, no additional participants were admitted. All of the participants completed the four-month long course with full attendance. Originally intended to consist of three meetings a week each lasting three hours, the teachers reported that it was impossible to restrict the meetings to less than four hours at a time due to the scale of participation and the scope of interest in the topics.

During the workshop, a space was created where dialogue and debate could flourish and the large diversity of the participants and their cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds could be taken into consideration. Playing an fundamental role in engaging the participants, the flexible curriculum encouraged them to use their practical skills and inquisitiveness and fostered the growth of qualities central to the process of life-long learning. The design, methodologies and foundations of 'learning to learn' strategies were employed in order to encourage the development of the participants' autonomy and self-empowerment. As a result of the use of this approach, participants became actively involved by asking questions on job-related topics. The teachers were able to support the participants by bringing information and holding readings on workers' rights, resulting in the establishment and evolution of an area of meaningful interaction between the teachers and learners.

The pilot programme and its workshop structure formed the non-formal education programme, Programa Aprender Siempre (Always Learn Programme), which is directed at people over the age of 20 and offers short educational courses. Dealing with many different themes, the programme has since been introduced both inside and outside of prison establishments.

In many prisons, music or theatre groups have been formed often with the support of paid and voluntary workshop instructors. Such occurrences have all been resoundingly successful, with many resulting in the production of shows for the public either in the prisons or in public halls.

In 2005, the largest prison in Uruguay, with half of the country's prison population, was not equipped with classrooms and, across the country, there were only nine teaching positions in five out of 27 prison establishments. Four years later, in 2009, the positions had risen to 51 covering 25 prisons; a marked improvement, arising from the recognition of the right to education for all and the beneficial effect of education in limiting the number of reoffenders.

The National Agency for Current and Released Prisoners has been supporting educational initiatives by supplying the prisons with a quantity of educational material which corresponds to the number of teachers at the institution. The agency has 19 centres across the country and serves to support imprisoned people, released offenders and their families, placing emphasis on the important role of reinsertion into employment as well as providing social, moral and material assistance.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The teaching teams meet every two weeks to participate in coordination meetings, in which topics such as motivating learners, dealing with prison staff, developing competencies, changes to the curriculum, educational space, etc. are discussed to prompt self-evaluation, pedagogical reflection, and the continuation and support of educational practises. Members of prison authorities attend the meetings from time to time in order to give the teachers a closer insight into

how the prison functions and the internal administrative rules which concern them as teachers.

As part of the evaluation of each programme, the teachers send statistical data on a monthly basis to the Central Governing Council. This information is used to analyse the quarterly reports and is shared with the inspectors in order to plan for and predict the specific needs of the learners in each educational context.

In 2008, the Support Commission coordinated the first Special Session, as part of which the teachers, offenders and wardens from one prison were interviewed individually on the weaknesses and strengths of prison education according to their experiences. Such events have since been held in several additional prisons following its valuable contribution to the task of uncovering the realities of prison education.

RECRUITMENT OF LEARNERS

An institutional incentive has been introduced across Uruguay which aims to encourage imprisoned people to attend educational programmes (Act Nº 17.897). The act makes it possible for prison sentences to be reduced when imprisoned people engage in regulated educational programmes. Two days of study, with one day equating to six learning hours, corresponds to a sentence remission of one day.

The possibility to receive accreditation for completing the official level of primary or basic education while in prison provides imprisoned people with an incentive to study as they can achieve a specific goal which will support them with their reintegration into society when they leave prison.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF FACILITATORS

Only qualified teachers are employed to work as teaching staff in the prisons in order to ensure that the quality of teaching remains high and, most importantly, to ensure that each teacher establishes himself or herself as a pedagogical authority rather than a supervisory authority during the programme. Qualified teachers are also preferred when hiring workshop instructors. A key aspect of the prison education programmes is the

regular exchange of ideas and experiences between the teachers during meetings and training days organized by the Support Commission. During the training days, political-educational aspects are examined and educational methodology is discussed. In the past, local ministerial authorities, educational branches, as well as teachers from various education branches, have been invited to attend and contribute to the event. The importance of developing areas for pedagogical reflection and interaction with educational professionals is a part of designing common educational projects.

LESSONS LEARNED

Establishing good relations with the prison staff and authorities is of prime importance in order to ensure efficiency and success with the educational programmes. As part of this, the experience and efforts to train prison staff and help them to recognize the importance of education has played a significant role. Since the prison system addresses a much broader set of objectives, including controlling and disciplining offenders, the task of firmly establishing education as a part of prison life is a difficult, and yet invaluable, undertaking which requires constant support from the authorities.

Prison education extends beyond simply supporting the literacy skills of people deprived of their liberty. The programmes in Uruguay have gained success through planning integrated curricula which incorporate practical skills, personal development and the foundations for lifelong learning. Importantly, the effects of the programmes have not been limited to people deprived of their liberty, but have been felt by their families and contribute to societal and community gains.

IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the last few years, the prison education system has been growing positively in both the capital city and rural regions, with much wider educational coverage offered in prisons across the country than in former times. Nowadays, the majority of the prisons feature areas dedicated to primary level teaching and the Uruguayan literacy programme, 'En el pais de Varela: yo sí puedo,' has been introduced in several prisons with positive results. The percentage of the prison popula-

tion engaged in education programmes has more than quadrupled from 5 per cent in 2005 to 29 per cent in 2008. Bearing in mind the rise in the number of prisoners, this achievement is not to be taken lightly and reflects concerted efforts to implement effective and attractive educational strategies for the prison population.

The establishment of knowledge environments in Uruguayan prisons has fostered great interest for learning among the prisoners and incited the growth of informal offshoot projects. Adapting the educational content and context even further, such projects make the education process more relevant, engaging and effective and set up the foundations for successful lifelong learning. Beginning as a small initiative, chess is one such activity which has been well received and successful in its aims to engage offenders and establish valuable learning environments. In one prison where it has been played for over two years, more than one quarter of the prisoners have started to play chess and monthly tournaments are held. Initially introduced and played during the workshops at the prison, the activity has been taught as often to family members as to other prisoners and has become a feature of daily life in the prison. Having learned chess in prison, one former prisoner began to teach the game to children at his local church shortly after completing his sentence.

In several prisons, a number of alternative educa-

tional programmes have emerged from ideas and contributions of the prisoners, promoting self-directed learning and relying on both non-formal and formal methods of education. The results from such participatory projects have been promising, particularly with regard to qualitative achievements (the enrichment of dialogue, better management of interpersonal rela-

tionships, the reinforcement of identities, the reconstruction of a new subjectivity, empathy, critical and creative thinking, etc.).

The success of the carnival project became evident through the predictably high level of participation and was then substantiated with the unforeseen results it provoked. Two of the main achievements were a website constructed for the families of the participants, above all, for their children, with poems and letters for them from the prisoners, and the production of a CD with lyrics and illustrations from the group. The learning experience, support for empowerment and feelings of accomplishment which the project brought about had a high emotional impact on everyone involved in the project.

The Vice President and the Director General of the National Agency for Current and Former Offenders have reported that a positive change has taken place in the relationships between the teaching staff and the prison employees over the last few years. They have accredited the improvement of the quality of education to the Support Commission and the assistance they offer to the teaching and prison staff in the form of awareness days and interviews.

CHALLENGES

After 2005, some of the greatest challenges to prison education have arisen from governance of the prison system itself, including overcrowding in prisons, lack of budgetary and extra-budgetary resources and the lack of a national unified prison structure. It has been noted that many prison areas, which may have formerly had another, sometimes educational, use, have been reallocated to accommodate more prisoners. Such challenges persist to this day and hamper the quality and quantity of education which can be offered in prisons. In interviews with the prison population, the challenges to prison education from their perspectives were revealed as a lack of didactic material, the limited available time for training and the lack of specialised programmes.

Overcoming the view of many people across all areas of administration (government, prison staff, teaching staff, etc.) that prison education is a marginal task carried out by volunteers is an additional challenge,

particularly when facing the often conflicting background, objectives and priorities of the prison staff and authorities. The reported resistance of prison staff to escort offenders to the classrooms has been recorded in a report on prison education in Uruguay from 2010. Tackling this issue is necessary in order to enhance the status of the staff working in educational positions and to guarantee the fulfillment of the prisoners' right to basic education.

In spite of the successes of the Support Commission, further coordination and promotion of education are needed on the level of national planning and across all areas of government. The challenge at hand is reaching all the relevant parties dealing with imprisoned people and making sure that the value of prison education is recognized. As late as 2009, a new prison was opened in Uruguay which had been constructed without incorporating educational areas into its design, highlighting the necessity to promote a higher prioritisation of prison education on a wider scale.

SUSTAINABILITY

The progress made in prison education since 2005 has been very beneficial for Uruguayan society, for the promotion of lifelong learning and the protection of the right to education for all. Though there are NGOs supporting projects in the area of prison education, the continuation of the prison education programme relies strongly on government funding and coordination. The continuing recognition of achievement and support by the government suggests that the shift in policy-makingtowards increased levels of education in prisons will be sustainable. However, it must be appreciated that more discernible results and advances can only be achieved through substantial prison reform, a deepening and widening of the programme and stronger coordination and promotion of the existing projects.

The flexible curriculum and heterogeneity of the programme allow the course content to be adapted to fit in with the participants, their interests and respective situations. Having such flexible features, the programme can be run repeatedly, requiring only a change in theme to maintain interest and to focus on new areas of learning. Given that it is possible for imprisoned people to pursue formal education quali-

fications while serving a sentence in Uruguay, the education programmes can lead to the reinsertion of learners into formal education and the acquisition of national qualifications.

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This publication demonstrates the potential of dynamic literate environments and the importance of nurturing a culture of reading and writing, examining four different contexts: digital environments, intergenerational settings, community libraries and prisons.

The case studies, from UNESCO's Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database (LitBase), show how the creation of opportunities and demand to use, improve and sustain (newly) acquired literacy skills can have a positive impact on people's motivation to (re-)engage in learning and encourage them to further integrate literacy into their everyday lives.

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