



Biblionef and libraries: the need of professionals and their associations

Biblionef believes that every child should have the access to books. Therefore we send on request new books, funds and knowledge to library projects and local organizations. Biblionef, a non profit organizations, mainly working with volunteers, operates in a network of supporting countries (Belgium, France and The Netherlands) and developing countries (Surinam, Caribbean region, South-Africa and Ghana). Local offices and representatives provide benefits such as local knowledge, partnerships, easy ways to add local books and books in local translations to the projects... etc. Let's describe Ghana as an example of our activities and concerns.

Ghana

Biblionef Ghana was founded in 2013 by Biblionef Netherlands and our local representative, Mrs. Patricia Arthur. She served two terms at the Ghana Library Association Council, a welcome expertise! In the first 2 years (2013 - 2014) Biblionef Ghana distributed 12.000 books which gave 40.000 children access to books. Next to the local books, we are working on our first translation of a book about HIV in 6 Ghanaian languages.

The current president of the Ghana Library Association, Perpetua Dadzie, is setting up Reading clubs. Biblionef supports this with materials. For example in Nkwantanang 8 schools are benefitting from this cooperation. Reading clinics are also given and Patricia Arthur serves as resource person for this.

Increased impact

Although we have been providing books from The Netherlands to Ghana for years, we were also looking for ways to increase the impact of the book donations. Why?

A book donation doesn't necessarily mean the books are used well or, sometimes, used at all. After the donation, we are not always certain if the books are used or are used as much as we would like. One of the main reasons is the absence of a reading culture and with it the knowledge of the teachers how to use the books, and more, the absence of trained librarians.

We decided to offer 1 or 2 teachers from every school which will receive books, a two- day training about library management and reading promotion. In the first 2 years 80 teachers participated in the training given by our representative. We do realize, 2 days is simply not enough, so we decided to do a 3-year program for the schools, where we are supporting the schools for 3 years with books and advice.

Trained staff

What obviously would be the best is: to have fully trained librarians. We simply just don't have the resources to pay for a full librarian education or pay the salary of a librarian.

Our strategy is focused on sustainability. This means we stimulate local responsibility, commitment and self-support/independency.

We invest, not only financially, but also in knowledge and experience, resulting in an independent, sustainable office.

Need for cooperation

What we really need for this are trained teachers and library staff in the (school)libraries, professionals who know how to use these books to cultivate the reading habit among children. That is why we are looking for ways to come into contact with associations of professionals, in order to co-operate and use the synergy for sustainable services. We believe **a model for true cooperation between library associations and development/library projects** would be very useful. We look forward to learn from such models.

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(in cooperation with Marian Koren, FOBID Netherlands Library Forum)