



Echo Bravo!

ORGANISATIONS	Booksteps & Echo Bravo!
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REPORT PERIOD	3RD Quarter, 2010
SUBMITTED BY	Joseph Anthony Asutai, Programme Manager.
PROJECT LOCATION	AMURU DISTRICT, Lamogi Sub-county, Pagak.
BENEFITING SCHOOLS	Pagak P/S; Kaladima P/S; Parabongo P/S; Awer P/S; Jimo P/S; Keyo P/S; Agwayugi P/S; and Olwal-Mucaja P/S.

1. Introduction

The Booksteps project is a mobile library facility located in Amuru District, Pagak – what used be a full-of-activity Internally Displaced Persons' camp. It serves eight primary schools. The project runs a book depot with more six thousand copies of a range of reference materials. Booksteps is placing books in the hands of learners, teachers, as well as interested members of the community. This way, it is contributing to the improvement of education quality in two-decade war-afflicted northern Uganda, as well as improving on the reading culture.

Beneficiaries

The eight schools are the biggest category of beneficiaries, as described above. The second category is the nursery schoolⁱ. The third category are termed readers. These are individuals who drop in the Booksteps depot and do their reading there. Most of them are pupils. There are also some students from Lacor school of nursing from Gulu University, who use the library resources when they are on holiday.

2. a) Successes

ⁱ About 60 children in the nursery benefit from Booksteps. Agnes Lalaro, a staff of Booksteps is directly in charge of these infants. She is timetabled to read with them stories in vernacular and English, daily.

- The lower classes (P.1-3) are now actively borrowing from Booksteps. They love thematic curriculum books.
- Blackboard sets and chats are very much on demand.
- Monthly, there are an average 60 readers, most of them pupils. Booksteps is also used by trainees in the War Child Holland and BOSCO (U)-run ICT projects in Pagak. Other users are from Keyo Secondary School.
- There is excitement about test papers from Kampala, which are now distributed to the eight schools.
- A one and half week period has been agreed on as the period between book box rotations.
- As part of M & E, regular readers are being tracked so as to gauge their performance in the national Primary School Leaving Examinations.

b) Challenges

- Librarians in some of the eight benefiting schools, e.g., Keyo Primary School, are inefficient - because they also double as heads of other disciplines, e.g., sports, music, etc.
- The rainy season has disrupted bicycle movement between some benefiting schools and the Booksteps depot.
- Some Booksteps focal persons who were earlier trained have transferred, e.g., the deputy headteacher of Jimo Primary School, Mr. Okumu. This has affected the school's involvement.
- Schools delay to return stocks, usually affecting the scheduled lending cycle among. This is worse during end of term.
- Pupils in Primary seven are very enthusiastic to use the library, they constitute the majority.

c) Way Forward

- Boda-boda (motorbike taxi) transport will be provided for the librarian to round-up stocks from the different schools before they break off for holidays.
- The poorly participating schools may have to be dropped unless there are strong reasons to keep them.

3. Innovations

As a direct result of the Booksteps project network in the schools, five of the schools are launching a joint "Quiz programme". It will see these schools cooperate in academics. Teachers will set and exchange tests, which will be administered to their learners collaboratively.

Conclusion

Booksteps project is hailed by all the involved schools although three of them have their own encumbrances. Other schools have expressed wish to join in the loop. Accordingly, Awer Primary School has come on board. Others like Amuru-Lamogi are too distant away to be admitted into the project, much as they have pleaded. Booksteps is an even better outfit with the new additions and involvement in the nursery school. What is also certain is that government-distributed book stocks to schools will dwindle as unscrupulous persons steal and sell them. There will thus be more reliance on Booksteps.