Library's training builds young leaders
Ghana Library Board, Northern Region

Needs assessment in villages around Tamale, capital of Northern Ghana, showed that only one in five young people who want to learn information and communication technology (ICT) skills receive training. Librarians saw this as a challenge. But with significant school drop-out rates and high unemployment among young people, the librarians realized that ICT training alone would not be enough. To make a difference, they would also have to build young people's

'The library is the place where knowledge is, a place where in-depth ICT knowledge can be obtained.' – Abass Amadu, IATP student.

confidence. They therefore decided to combine ICT and leadership training.

With EIFL-PLIP support (US$30,000), the library purchased and installed 25 computers, a scanner and printer. They created a training centre, recruited trainers and developed a curriculum. They marketed the course through local radio and newspapers, and in community meetings. The Internet Access and Training Programme (IATP) for vulnerable young people was ready to begin.

The training

The library's technical curriculum includes basic computer literacy; MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Internet skills, Web 2.0 tools and Google applications. Leadership training includes communication, integrity, respect, motivation and other life skills. Facilitators provided career guidance and one-to-one counselling sessions with students. Training was intended to last for three months at a time. But some young people, especially girls, missed classes because they had to earn a living, selling fruit and vegetables, washing bowls and waiting in restaurants. So the library revisited the timetable, making it more flexible. In less than a year, the library trained 190 students (125 young women and 65 young men). The majority, 145, were unemployed.

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What the librarians say

• Library use has increased by 54%, from 575 users a week before the IATP to 884 a week after the end of the project in 2011.

• The computers were well used – the library estimates average use rate per computer is 62.5%.

What the students say

'After the ICT programme, I gained admission into Shikina international school. My friends who find it difficult to work on the computer now come to me for help.' – *Joyce Gifty Ofori.*

'As a young lady, I am usually timid – especially in our cultural context. But with discussion at the meetings I have developed my confidence levels and can now speak in public – something I dreaded in the past.' – *Esther Asiedu.*

What the parents say

'When we realized what the Library has achieved with its computer and leadership training programme in tackling the high rate of drop-outs in the metro, we are happy to be associated with the library.' – *Mr Ibrahim of the National Service Scheme, Tamale Metro Office.*

The future

The project has won the support of many important stakeholders, and has blessing of His Royal Highness, Dakpema, the paramount chief of Tamale. Librarians are committed to continuing with the training, and the Ghana Library Board has included a contribution to IATP in its budget.

EIFL-PLIP supported the IATP in May 2010. A year later, the library assessed the impact of the project.
Information presented here is based on the library's assessment. For further information, contact Aaron Kuworno, head of Northern Regional Library – aaronkuwornu@gmail.com.

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