



knowledge without boundaries

EIFL-PLIP

Improving lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services

Rural libraries contribute to teenagers' health Uganda Community Libraries Association

IMPACT CASE STUDY

Uganda Community Libraries Association (UgCLA) worked with five community libraries to provide teenagers living in rural communities with essential sexual and nutritional health information through Health Reading and Computer Camps. The service –

- Increased knowledge about health and nutrition, and its practical application in personal hygiene, diet and agriculture, in five rural communities.
- Strengthened partnerships between community libraries, clinics and hospitals, and schools in the five communities.
- Initiated Youth Leadership Groups in community libraries, attracting over 300 youth from 17 schools, who inspired two communities to start vegetable gardens and a fish pond based on nutritional principles.
- Enhanced the reputation of the five libraries as creators of non-formal educational opportunities for youth in their communities.

Ugandan teenagers need information about sexual and nutritional health. Although the incidence of HIV/AIDS has reduced in Uganda, the disease continues to be a threat. Many girls have their schooling interrupted by unwanted pregnancies, or problems handling



“The activity that I liked most was learning computers, but I also liked the way we interacted and the way the facilitators answered our questions.” – camp participant, Busolwe Community Library



menstruation. Information about nutrition is also scarce, and in its Nutrition Action Plan (2011), the Ugandan Government highlighted the importance of educating youth about nutrition.

With a small grant (up to US\$20,000) from the EIFL Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP), UgCLA worked with five community libraries (see the map) to organize health, reading and computer training camps for teenagers. To provide the service, libraries improved their infrastructure, acquiring five laptop computers and five routers, a selection of indoor and outdoor games, health related posters and books.

In just one year, UgCLA and the five community libraries –

- Developed a programme of camp activities including education and discussion on health and nutrition; training in basic computer skills and internet search; reading and critically assessing health information found in books and online, and indoor and outdoor games;
- Engaged and trained 15 camp facilitators – three from each community: a librarian, a health worker and a secondary school teacher;
- Organized five successful week-long camps, attracting 103 teenagers who later organized themselves into Youth Leadership Groups;
- Encouraged more effective use of computer technology by youth and community librarians;
- Disseminated their experience at the national conference of UgCLA, sharing knowledge with over 30 more libraries, who are keen to replicate the camps.

The future

The Youth Leadership Groups initiated by the libraries now meet regularly, read books and research the internet, and are spreading health information at schools and in their communities. The response to the health camps has been overwhelmingly positive, and UgCLA is seeking funding to replicate the service in libraries serving other rural communities. The five libraries have also been fundraising, and report receiving offers of financial and in-kind support. Two of the libraries have already received support to improve their buildings and environments to welcome new visitors.

The EIFL-PLIP grant was awarded in May 2014. A year later, the library assessed the impact of the service. Information presented here is based on the library's impact assessment. For further information, contact National Coordinator of UgCLA, Brenda Musoke Musasizi: musokebren@gmail.com.

EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) works with libraries to enable access to knowledge in developing and transition economy countries in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe and Latin America. The EIFL Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) supports libraries to implement community development projects. The EIFL Public Library Innovation Programme is supported by a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.



Teenagers research the internet for health information at CFYDDI library.

“The camp was a very good experience. The youths decided to keep on visiting our health centre, Grace Family Health centre, for further advice.” – Nazarious Ndinayo, health worker and camp facilitator, Access Knowledge