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Internet Access and Training Programme

Northern Regional Library
Tamale, Ghana
March 2011

Young trainees of the IATP in the Northern Regional Library's new ICT and youth leadership training centre.

SUMMARY

INNOVATIVE IDEA

Combining youth leadership and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills to build young people's future security.
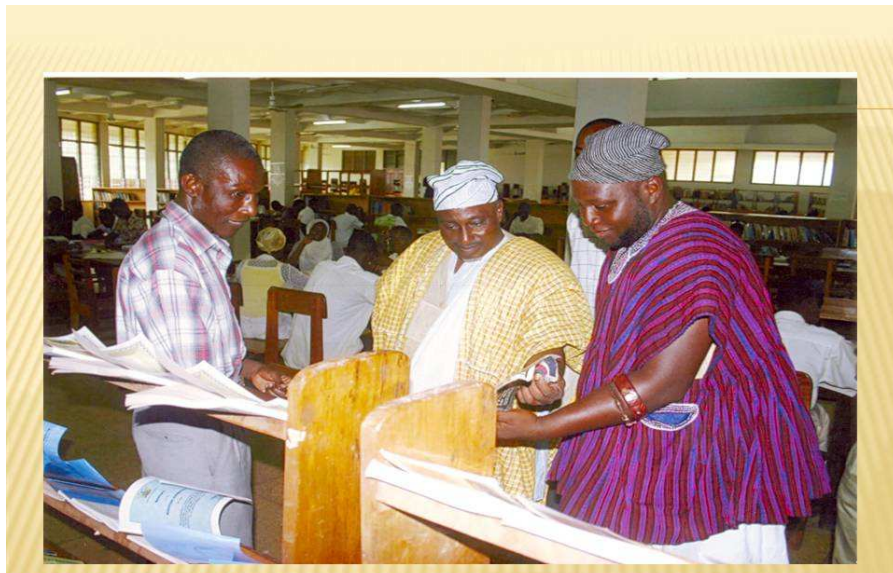
THE PROJECT

The library's aim is to increase skills and confidence of youth from rural villages around the town of Tamale, where unemployment is high and young people are vulnerable. After establishing the need, the library set up a training centre, equipped it with computers, connected them to the Internet and successfully trained 190 young people in leadership and ICT skills.

Feedback from young people has been positive, and – to the surprise of the library – parents were so impressed that they also attended the leadership training.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Successfully integrating a computer skills, Internet and youth leadership training centre into the library's services;
- Training 190 young people in ICT and leadership skills.
- Building partnerships with the Ministry of Education;
- Raising the profile and popularity of the library.
- Positive impact on young people, with respect to ICT skills and understandings; social interaction and time management.

Winning support of traditional leaders was very important to the IATP. Royal Highness, Dakpema (right), visited the library and spoke in praise of the project.

CASE STUDY – INTERNET ACCESS AND TRAINING PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

The Northern Regional Library serves a population of 514,000 living in Tamale, the capital of Northern Ghana, and in surrounding rural villages. Needs assessment, including focus groups with library users, community members and stakeholders, showed that only one in five young people who want ICT skills receives training, and that girls especially struggle to access training.

In a situation where unemployment is high, young people need skills. The library recognized that technical skills are not enough, and that young people also need leadership skills and confidence to get ahead in life.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Goals

The Internet Access and Training Programme (IATP) builds young people's leadership and ICT skills, to increase their ability to get jobs and become leaders and role models in their communities. It reaches out to youth living in rural villages around Tamale, where unemployment is especially high and young people's futures are especially insecure.

Implementation

Marketing through the local media and word of mouth produced an overwhelming response and the library registered 200 young people for training. Of these, 190 completed the course. We trained the young people in two groups. In all, 125 young women and 65 young men received training in both ICT skills and youth leadership.

The training curricula were developed by the library's partner organizations. Classes were held in the library's premises, where 25 computers with Internet connections were installed, creating a training centre.

Training challenges

Although the library and its partners successfully trained 190 young people, the library initially experienced some challenges with respect to attendance by both trainees and volunteer facilitators.

The training was intended to last for a week at a time, with participants attending daily. However, some young people, especially girls, have to earn a living. They do other work, including small trading, acting as porters and washing bowls and attending to customers at restaurants. Initially, the trainees missed classes because of these jobs. The time pressures for facilitators, who were volunteers with other work commitments, were also at times too great, and they too missed classes.

> *'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.'*
> – Ms Asiedu Esther (age 20)

To overcome these challenges, the library revisited the training timetable, making it more flexible and relaxed for both the trainees and the facilitators.

As the library got to know the trainees better, a variety of training methods was introduced, including one-to-one counseling, seminars and workshops which enabled more interaction between youth and facilitators.

PARTNERSHIPS

The project was initiated, designed and launched in partnership with a local NGO which unfortunately withdrew during the implementation phase. The library managed to find another NGO partner, Savana Signatures, whose mission and goals were also in alignment with the IATP's overall mission of youth development.

The Ministry of Education, the National Youth Employment Programme and the National Service Scheme are important government stakeholders and are providing the library with human resources to support the project.

> *'When we realized what the Library has achieved with its computer, 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, Tamale Metro Office.*

STRATEGIES, TACTICS AND TOOLS

Support of traditional and municipal leadership

Winning the support of traditional leadership was important, and the project has the blessing of His Royal Highness, Dakpema, the paramount chief of Tamale, who personally visited to the library's training centre and encouraged the participants. His support and visit boosted the morale of trainees and ignited their commitment.

Another important visitor was the Tamale Metropolitan Chief Executive who took time out of his busy schedule to see the library's training programme for himself.

Including parents

Some parents were so impressed with the training that they attended leadership seminars and advised the youth to take the programme seriously. Support and participation of parents further strengthened young people's commitment.

> *'I wish IATP could organize a capacity building programme for us in the future.'*
>
> *- Feedback from a parent.*

Reaching out through diverse media

Radio, local print and online media reported the goals and activities of the project, sensitizing communities, popularizing the course among youth and reaching rural villages.

Using high quality technology

The library chose high speed computers, more advanced than those provided by most local Internet cafes. The good quality of the equipment facilitated training and was attractive to young people.

PRELIMINARY IMPACT

The Northern Regional Library is currently completing impact assessment research. Preliminary impact demonstrates:

- Increased use of the library (measured in numbers of visitors).

- Improved time management among youth. When the training programme began, about six trainees would come 30 minutes late. Lateness decreased over time, and by the end of training 100% of trainees were arriving on time. Some even started coming early, and spent time in the library, reading, until the training began.

- Improvement in beneficiaries' social life. Facilitators observed that there has been a change in the way the participants interact with each other and express themselves.

> *"I am now computer literate through this organization. I can write a report and have learned self and time management through the leadership training.'*
> – Mr Musa Sherifatu (age 21).

> *'Indeed, my morale has been boosted as a result of my participation in the leadership and ICT programme. It will help me behave well during elections. It has indeed changed my life!'*
>
> *- Sayibu Mohammed Awal, aged 21.*

LESSONS LEARNT

The library has found delivering the new service exciting, with ups and downs.

Building and maintaining partnerships

The key lesson learnt was that it is not easy for a well-established institution, like a library which is part of a bigger system, to work with an NGO that is not equally strong. The way to prevent difficulties arising with partners is to research partner organizations properly, to choose partner organizations that are strong and stable and whose missions are in alignment with the goals of the new service.

It is also important to choose partners who can help extend the service further and contribute to ongoing sustainability.

Training

It is important to take into account the lives and constraints of trainees and trainers when designing training programmes.

SUSTAINABILITY

> *'The library is the place where knowledge is, a place where in-depth ICT knowledge can be obtained.'*
> – Mr Abass Amadu, (age 25).

The library plans to continue the work of the IATP through its partner organizations, including the training and development NGO Savannah Signatures; the Ministry of Education, which is a key stakeholder in library operations, and the National Service Scheme, which works to provide young people opportunities in State institutions. The library's budget also now makes room for inclusion and sustainability of the IATP.