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IMPACT CASE STUDY

Library computers help slum school children
Kenya National Library Service / Kibera Public Library

Kibera Public Library, a branch of the Kenya National Library Service, uses internet-connected tablet computers pre-loaded with educational content linked to the national education curriculum to help children living in Kibera, the largest slum in east Africa and home to over a million people, improve their school results. The programme -

• Demonstrated the effectiveness of information and communication technology (ICT) in supporting classroom teaching.

• Helped students with vital school subjects: over half of the students interviewed in a library survey said the programme had helped improve their English, mathematics and science.

• Won recognition: Kenya National Library Service has secured funding from an international non-governmental organization to replicate the programme in three branch libraries.

• Earned the support of parents, teachers and headmasters in Kibera.

"This was the chance of a lifetime. We learnt how to Google, to do research, take photos and we could get access to all school subjects. We learnt through solving puzzles and doing tests, like test-yourself mathematics. The programme helped me improve my academic progress." - Albert, Class 8, Anajali school, Kibera.

"I have improved in my examinations and it is good to come to the library to do homework." – student, Kibera.

Families in Kibera live in poverty in shacks made of wood, mud and metal. Schools are under-resourced and most classrooms do not have electricity. Poor education means children struggle to pass exams; lack of access to ICT disadvantages them in a job-market that increasingly demands ICT skills.

From the moment it opened its doors in June 2012, Kibera Public Library made helping children a priority. Librarians teamed up with the educational agency, eLimu, and with a small grant (up to US$15,000) from EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP), the library designed a programme that makes learning both

"Since the students attended tablet computer training, they have shown great improvement, particularly in English, and this has influenced their other subjects, as noted by various teachers." – Lawrence Wanji, teacher, Tumaini Church and Hope Academy Elementary School, Kibera.

affordable and fun. They bought a wireless router and seven tablet computers pre-loaded with eLimu's educational content, which is presented in engaging formats including video and

EIFL-PLIP
Improving lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services

animations. They designed an ICT training course and taught students to use the tablet computers. They launched a series of quizzes based on subjects like science, history, geography and maths, with attractive prizes for the winners. Word spread quickly and soon the library was inundated with eager children. In less than a year, the library –

• Trained 120 students (aged 8-15) from 10 schools to use the tablet computers and to research the internet. This was more than double the 50 students originally intended.

• In 15 sessions, trained students to access and use eLimu's educational content. Sessions ended with quizzes to test students' learning in key school subjects – mathematics, science, English and others.

• Hosted training for 48 teachers to deepen understanding of the value of the pre-loaded tablet computers and the internet to classroom learning.

• Trained six librarians and four volunteer teachers to work with the children.

• Registered 466 students as new library members (253 boys and 213 girls).

Public libraries – partners in development

Kenya's Vision 2030 – the country's national development plan – emphasises the importance of ICT in modernizing Kenya's economy and in creating job for the thousands of youth who complete school and university every year. The long-term vision includes building a modern ICT Park in Nairobi and mainstreaming ICT as a school subject in 20,000 primary and 6,000 public secondary schools.

To realize Vision 2030, the government has mobilized all sectors of industry, business and civil society. Kenya National Library Service's innovative tablet computer education programme for children in Kibera provides a cost-effective model for reaching the most marginalized communities and helping meet the country's goals.

The future

Kibera Public Library is now known in the community as a space where children can both learn and have fun. Kenya National Library Service will continue to fund the library's internet connection and future plans include a 'Tablet Hour', including skills training and practice, quizzes and games, for children on Saturdays. Kenya National Library Service has received a grant of US$27,300 from the non-governmental organization, Book Aid International, to replicate the programme in three more branch libraries: Meru (Eastern Province), Wajir (North Eastern Province) and Kisumu (Nyanza Province in western Kenya).

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