

READ International Library Renovation Project **Quarterly Report November 2009**

In August and September of 2009 READ International, supported by a donation from the Dar es Salaam Goats Race Foundation, embarked on the renovation of seven libraries across Tanzania. The project delivers attractive and conducive learning environments where students are encouraged and supported to read, both for study and pleasure. This expands upon READ International's commitment to provide good quality, relevant reading materials and learning resources to East African schools.

The renovation projects in 2009 were based on the trial project run at Saba Saba Secondary School in Mtwara in the previous year. The library in Saba Saba has continued working effectively with more than 550 books borrowed over a six-month period and in excess of 100 students visiting the library per day. In 2009, library renovations were undertaken in **Kigoma, Tanga, Mara, Shinyanga, Tabora, Lindi and Mtwara** (see below). Within the regions, the schools were chosen in conjunction with the Regional and District Education Officers. This continued to ensure that the entire education community was in support of READ International's work in the region.

The seven renovation teams, of 32 volunteers in total, organized their time between working on the library and the continued work of distributing thousands of secondary schools textbooks across the region. Each project was given a budget of 1,600,000 Tshs to pay for all the materials necessary for the renovation. The university-student volunteers were given responsibility to project-manage the entire renovation process, from coordinating the design and features of the library with the students and staff to the purchasing of renovation materials and organising the teams of student volunteers to ensure the project was completed within the given timeframe and budget.

Over 40% of the library budget was used to supply the library with a good stock of books purchased in Tanzania for the subjects that READ International is unable to provide (a list of titles has been included in the appendix). We also provided narrative books by East African authors, published in Kiswahili, to help improve the reading culture within the school. This was in response to feedback from the students from Saba Saba who, while stressing the



importance of books in English to help with their studies, requested Kiswahili readers to be provided for leisure. In future we hope to provide more locally sourced books.

Throughout the six weeks that volunteers were working in the libraries, they were supported by teams of school students, who were encouraged to become involved with as much of the renovation process as possible. For the READ International volunteers, this was a great opportunity to spend time with the students gaining a valuable insight in to the day-to-day lives of Tanzanian children. For the school students, they were given the responsibility of creating their own space that would be conducive for study and leisure. This creates a sense of ownership that will ensure that the library continued to function after the READ volunteers left the region. Volunteers have continued to keep in contact with the students they worked alongside during the renovation process, with the Tanzanian students relaying how the library is functioning, as well as how the school is using the space.

As of 2009, the new country office in Dar es Salaam, allows READ International to receive feedback from students, teachers and regional educational authorities all year round. We will continue to monitor library usage and feedback from all levels of the school community in continuing support of the libraries already renovated, but also to improve the quality of the library renovations we plan to conduct in the future. In August 2010, READ International volunteers intend to lead 14 further library renovation projects across Tanzania.

Mtwara Technical Secondary School, Mtwara

"I think that once the staff saw the difference we were making and the books we were bringing in and saw that this library would be worth looking after properly, they wanted to do a thorough and complete job and did the final touches that really made a difference."

(Yuka Murata, READ volunteer, University of Warwick)

The library renovation project began in Mtwara in 2008. With the successful renovation of the library at Saba Saba Secondary School, the new team of Warwick volunteers in 2009 had the challenge of maintaining the high quality of work that gave READ International a good reputation in the region. The headmaster of Mtwara Technical School had been at the opening ceremony of the library in 2008 and so welcomed the team to his school a year later.

The team certainly had a big task ahead of them. The building was an unusual 'U' shape with high walls and a courtyard in the centre. Louise Warman project-led the renovation, and was nervous to be undertaking a project of this scale with only basic DIY skills. But, with support from READ International staff, the team soon realised that the greatest requirements to mix crack-filler, wash walls and apply paint were enthusiasm, hard work and common sense.

The volunteers' hard work was matched by the school's commitment to improve the library building in ways the volunteers weren't able. The school carpenter was brought in to patch a hold in the ceiling, a local electrician reinstalled electricity and a teacher borrowed a glass-cutter that helped to replace all of the windows on the library. Being a technical college meant that many of the students took an active interest in the renovation process, giving advice to the volunteers that, they themselves had learnt in school that very morning.

The interest students showed in the library was not restricted to the technical improvements to the building. A small number of students became the library committee who involved themselves with the referencing and logging of the new books that were put on the shelves. They worked well with the new librarian who was assigned the role in line with the continuing commitment by the school to maintain their renovated library. Early feedback suggests that committee continues to promote library use to the whole school. As well as believing in the importance of reading and studying, the library committee are keen to support the work of the READ International volunteers, who became their good friends throughout the project.



Before

After



Mkonge Secondary School, Lindi

“What made all the hard work worthwhile was the first student picking up a book, pulling up a chair and getting immersed in the story.”

(Tom Barry, READ volunteer, University of Birmingham)

There were only 4 volunteers available to go to Lindi and the team members did not meet each other before they arrived in Dar es Salaam. But very quickly they became firm friends, which meant the teamwork necessary to complete the book distributions and library project came easily to them.

Being one of only two secondary schools in Lindi town means that Mkonge Secondary School caters to hundreds of students. Despite this, the library was only being used as an exam hall rather than an extra space for study to accommodate the large number of students.

The project-manager, Tom Barry, did an excellent job of delegating the necessary tasks amongst the other READ International volunteers and Mkonge school students. Students were given the responsibility to complete tasks by themselves or with a small group of friends. Having such faith in their abilities meant the renovation went extremely quickly and smoothly.

The all-important referencing of the library books was undertaken by the newly-installed library committee that were responsible for the library. These students also took part in matching the books that READ International brought to the syllabus, emphasising the relevance of the textbooks. These students would be the voices that would articulate this relevance to the rest of the school community.

The renovation at Mkonge Secondary was undoubtedly the swiftest, but despite its speed, the library was completed to a very high standard. With the READ volunteers managing the budget sensibly, there was enough money to make the building more appealing and comfortable. One of the features Tom is most proud about is the path leading from the school to the library building, painted in READ colours. To further entice the students towards the library for leisure, cushions and carpet were bought to make a relaxing reading corner. Testament to this initiative shown by the READ volunteers, this reading area was the most used feature of the library.

Before



After



Kigoma Secondary School, Kigoma

“We made the library useable, brought relevant books and importantly encouraged the students to use the books and the library as much as possible. We could successfully do this as we were also students, often of the same age and we could share ideas and information about our different cultures but relate to them also.”

(Elliot Baker, READ Volunteer, University of Kent)



Kigoma Secondary School takes in the best students from across Tanzania, and therefore has a great reputation for academic excellence in the region. Saying this, the library was severely underused, with the only time it ever had students in it was when it was used as an exam hall.

Progress was slow at the start for the READ team from Kent, as there was some minor repair work to be carried out on the building where an earthquake had caused a crack across the wall. In a joint venture with the school, this was fixed to a high standard meaning the building will be safe for years to come. Access to electricity was also fixed in the building, allowing lighting to be reinstalled meaning the boarding students can now continue to read into the evenings.

The level of commitment to the project shown by READ International volunteers quickly convinced the school of the team’s professionalism.

Being a school with an accomplished academic record, there certainly was a lot of support from the students for a new library. They were however unable to donate as much time to the project as they would have liked, as in any spare time they had was spent studying. The READ team could hardly complain about this!

During the time of the renovation the headmaster was absent with meetings in Tabora, meaning he was unable to add his authority to the project in the first few weeks. However on his return, he was able to see the big difference the team had made. He was so impressed that he got as many students as possible into the library to make a speech on how the READ International volunteers were an excellent example of young people taking responsibility for education.

The opening ceremony was a great opportunity for everyone who had got involved to come together and look at what they had created. Members from the Regional Education Office who attended, seeing how the students responded to the improved facilities, announced there would be a commitment to improving library services across Kigoma.



Before



After

Tabora Boys Secondary School, Tabora

"It became apparent to me whilst working in the library that many of the skills I am using in the renovation were indeed taught to me by someone very special. I feel therefore I should take a moment to thank my very own DAD. Thanks DAD!!!"

(Yousaf Bhatti, READ volunteer, Kings College London)

Undertaking a renovation in one of Tanzania's oldest and most prestigious schools was a great honour for the team from Kings College London. Considering the school is held in such high regard, there was still a lot of work to do in the library. As a space it was underused and full of useless books that were, on the whole, badly referenced.

The team put in the effort in the first few days to establish what the students of Tabora Boys School needed in their library. While the team were following a training booklet produced by READ International, the emphasis was on catering the library to the specific students. By simply going round the classes talking to the students and teachers, the team were able to work out why the library wasn't being used but also whip up some enthusiasm for the renovation. The students realised that the READ International volunteers were not much older than themselves, and were more inclined to get stuck in.

Throughout the project, the READ team continued to be referred to as the school's "distinguished guests." This obvious appreciation for READ's presence was consistent throughout the renovation process, with a great number of students having a hand in the improvement of the library. However the most consistent team were affectionately dubbed 'Team J' as it consisted of Julius, Jafar (1), Jafar (2), Juma, Joro and Jafari. They were heavily involved in the painting of the rooms, and provided constant reassurance for Yousaf, when he thought the white paint he was applying was turning the walls grey. Thankfully, the walls turned brilliant white by the end!

The Kings team had an extra pressure throughout the process of knowing that the READ International Trustees were making a trip to Tabora to experience a book distribution, but also to see how the library project was progressing. With some good project management by Yousaf, the library was completed in time for the Trustee's arrival. The Trustees had to accept that they were not to be the guests of honour at the celebration event- after 5 weeks of hard work, the school were keen to send the READ team off in style, with the school brass band escorting the volunteers to the event!



Before

After



Rajani Secondary School, Shinyanga

“The students were accepting and eager to help from the beginning.”
(Lizzie Thomson, READ volunteer, University of East Anglia)

It was the team from the University of East Anglia that were given the task of renovating the library in Shinyanga, a region READ have been visiting since 2007. The library at Rajani Secondary School was an empty room, lacking furniture with only a blackboard to mark it as a room for learning. The windows were open with only bars with no mesh. The team did an impressive job against many obstacles to produce a really nice space with a strong library infrastructure.

One of the things the Norwich team found was the initial uncertainty from the headmaster towards the team- unsure whether this renovation would be beneficial and not cost the school thousands of shillings. After a few days of hard work by the team in sanding down the walls, and a well-organized budget, the school realized READ International's good intentions. Once this had been recognized the school garnered the support of the local carpenter, Mr Abdallah, to advise on furniture and produce it at the best possible price.

During the renovation, the team were visited by the READ International Trustees. The Norwich team did not miss out the opportunity for extra pairs of hands; before they knew it, the Trustees, including Tom Levitt, UK MP and Patron of READ International, were helping to attach wire mesh to the windows.

The UEA team paid particular attention to syllabus matching creating bright colourful posters for the library suggesting particular textbooks for specific syllabus topics. Efforts like this highlight the relevance of the books that READ International distributes and make it much simpler for the students and teachers to use them effectively. This, and the great work the team did in renovating the library, means the space is much more likely to be used throughout the academic year.

Before



After

Mmazami Secondary School, Mara

"My favourite aspect was the library project as you got to know some of the kids really well and...had a really strong sense of achievement."

(Sophie Pain, READ Volunteer, University of Nottingham)

The team from Nottingham struggled at first to find an adequate space- one library of the libraries they were shown did not have a proper floor and was prone to becoming a marsh, another had not even been built yet (although the school maintained they could finish it in a week!) However with a bit of perseverance, the team managed to find a good space at Mmazami Secondary School in Musoma rural.

When the team arrived, textbooks previously donated by READ were being used, but stored on the floor and piled on the desks of the library. The school community were really happy to help out with the whole renovation, with a team of twenty students working in the library at any one time- even when they weren't asked. Where the students were most useful was giving the volunteers advice on all things DIY. Team-leader, Laura Thomson, was a self-confessed beginner at painting and decorating but with the support of the school students and staff they overcame all of the challenges that presented themselves to the team.



One of the big purchases for the library was a set of four bookshelves. While demanding a considerable part of the budget, they were well-crafted by a local carpenter and so are set to last for years to come. These bookshelves held the newly-referenced books and gave them a new home where they belonged. The idea of referencing was new to the students and even some of the teachers, but once the READ team talked through the system, the school were really committed to making it work.

With the painting and referencing done, both staff and students joined together in a celebration event for the opening of the library. Everyone patted themselves on the back for a job well done, and there was even time for a bit of Frisbee!

Before



After



Mkwakwani Secondary School, Tanga

"You could see that you were making a real difference to the school environment and you did feel that by involving the students right from the start they had a sense of ownership over the library and that they would look after it in years to come."

(Martha Shields, READ Volunteer, University of Newcastle)

The library at Mkwakwani Secondary School was in a bad state when the READ team arrived, being a library in name only. The walls were dirty and flaking old paint, there was a 6m long trench in the floor, there were no doors and the metal window grids were wrapped in barbed wire. However the biggest problem facing the library was that there were numerous holes in the ceiling that caused rainwater to come in. Needless to say the library wasn't used at all.



The headmaster welcomed the READ team from Newcastle University with open arms and promised to have the roof fixed within a week. While there was some initial scepticism that this would not happen, the headmaster was true to his word and made the library watertight so work could begin.

As work began, the team were supported well by the school. Everyday whenever the students crossed the playground to school they would always pop their heads in through the window to check how things were progressing. The school were really receptive to the needs of the volunteers- when they needed a ladder, one was found from the local carpenter in less than 10 minutes!

It was a large building and so the painting took a lot longer than the team first imagined- there were still some areas that needed touching up on the day of the opening ceremony. Even with this added pressure, the opening ceremony was a great success. The READ team explained how the library referencing system worked to the teachers and the students. The renovation encouraged the school to save funds to renovate the rest of the building offering a wider range of facilities to their students.



Before

After



Appendix I

Books Purchased for Library Renovations, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 2009

Non-fiction

Civics for Secondary School Book 1 (2)
Civics for Secondary School Book 2 (2)
Civics for Secondary School Book 3 (2)
Civics for Secondary School Book 4 (2)
Swahili-English Dictionary (3)
Swahili-Swahili Dictionary (2)
English-Swahili Dictionary (2)
The New Students Companion (5)
Geography for Secondary Schools Book 1 (2)
Geography for Secondary Schools Book 2 (2)
Geography for Secondary Schools Book 3 (2)
Geography for Secondary Schools Book 4 (2)
Longmans Secondary Atlas for East Africa (3)
Secondary History Form 1 (4)
Secondary History Form 2 (4)
Secondary History Form 3 & 4 (4)

Fiction

The Black Hermit (Ngugi wa Thiong'o) (2)
This Time Tomorrow (Ngugi wa Thiong'o) (2)
Three Suitors: One Husband/ Until Further Notice (Guillaume Oyono-Mbia) (2)
Kilio Chetu (2)
Orodha (Steve Reynolds) (2)
Ngoswe (Edwin Semzaba) (2)
Summons (Richard S. Mabala) (2)
Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol (Okot p'Bitek) (2)
Wasakatonge (Muhammed Seif Khatib) (2)
Malenga Wapya (2)
Rahema the Housegirl (5)
Mabala the Farmer (5)
Hawa the Bus Driver (5)
The Lion and the Jewel (Wole Soyinka) (2)
Passed Like a Shadow (Bernard Mapalala) (2)
A Wreath for Fr. Meyer (2)
Weep Not, Child (Ngugi wa Thiong'o) (2)
Spared (S.Ndunguru) (2)
The Interview (Patrick M. Ngugi) (2)
Unanswered Cries (Osman Conteh) (2)
Alfu Lela Ulela 1 (2)
Alfu Lela Ulela 2 (2)
Alfu Lela Ulela 3 (2)
Alfu Lela Ulela 4 (2)
Alfu Lela Ulela 5 (2)
Alfu Lela Ulela 6 (2)
Barua ndefu kama hii (2)
Mashairi ya Chekacheka (T. Mvungi) (2)
Joka la Mdimu (Abdallah J.Saffari) (2)
Takadini (Ben Hanson) (2)
Watoto wa maman'tile (2)