Background:
- Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has the lowest primary education enrollment and youth literacy rate of all regions reporting to the United Nations.¹
- Libraries play a major role in fostering literacy skills in pre-k/elementary school children.²
- In 2008, the Millennium Change Corporation (MCC) granted Namibia $145 million mostly for a massive education project titled the Namibian Library Development Program (NLDP) to be guided by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Directorate of National Library and Archive Services (NLAS). The International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) joined in 2009 as consultants.
- NLDP plans to open three community libraries called Regional Study Resource Centers (RSRCs) this year.

Research Questions:
- Question 1: Does NLDP have the potential to support primary education in Namibia?
- Question 2: Are plans for this program innovative, thorough and sustainable?

Methodology:
- An examination of NLDP’s plan via exclusive documents provided by IREX
- Qualitative stakeholder feedback surveys
- An analysis of the plan and surveys; as well as Namibia’s economy, educational system and library services through the Conceptual Framework for a Study of the Dissemination of Educational Innovations³

Conclusion:
- Answer 1: Yes, this program has the potential to support primary education in following ways:
  - Lowering educational inequality gap—Bookmobile trucks will service the rural (poorer) areas
  - Improving reading literacy—Children’s library will provide popular and native youth literature books
  - Improving ESL test scores—English as Second Language (ESL) courses will assist with linguistics
  - Facilitating independent learning—Information and Communications Technology (ICT) centers will provide internet access to support homework and studying
- Answer 2: NLDP’s plans are innovative and for the most part, thorough due to transparent and purposeful goals (e.g. improving access to information resources and study facilities in underserved areas); a participatory approach to development (e.g. community issued surveys and focus groups); a state-of-the-art building design; and strong partnerships between the MCC, MoE/NLAS, and IREX that encourages future stakeholder investments.
- However, the program will not be sustainable until a rational plan is established (soon) to generate revenue from those future stakeholders to keep libraries of this magnitude functioning, and sufficient qualified staff is hired and trained to manage the RSRCs.

References:

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